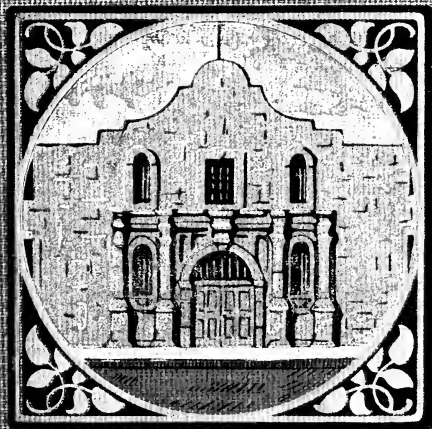
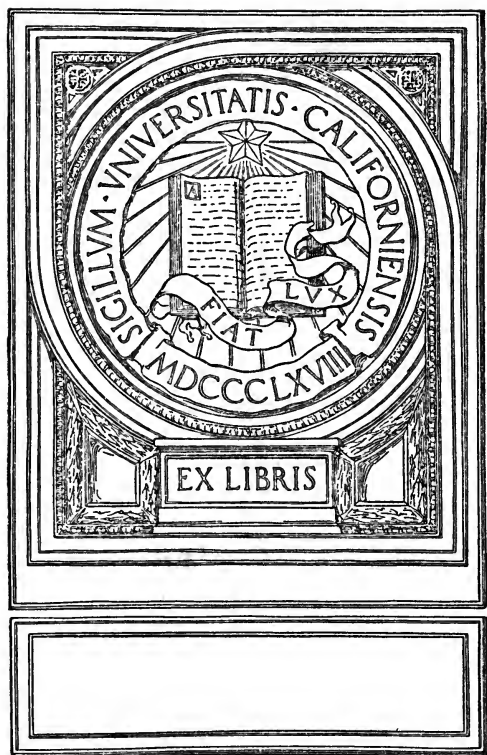


In the
ALAMO



by
Opie Read



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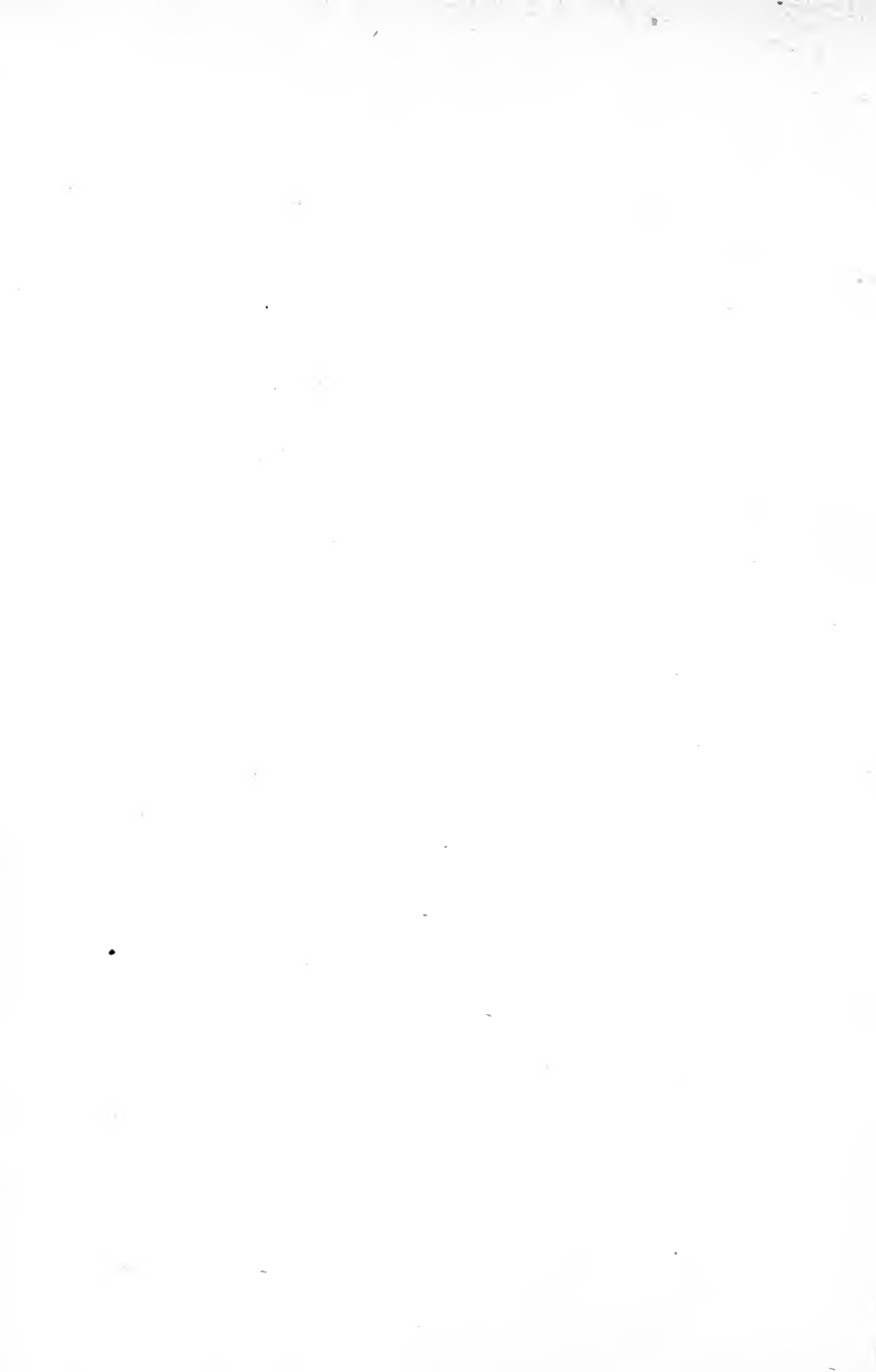
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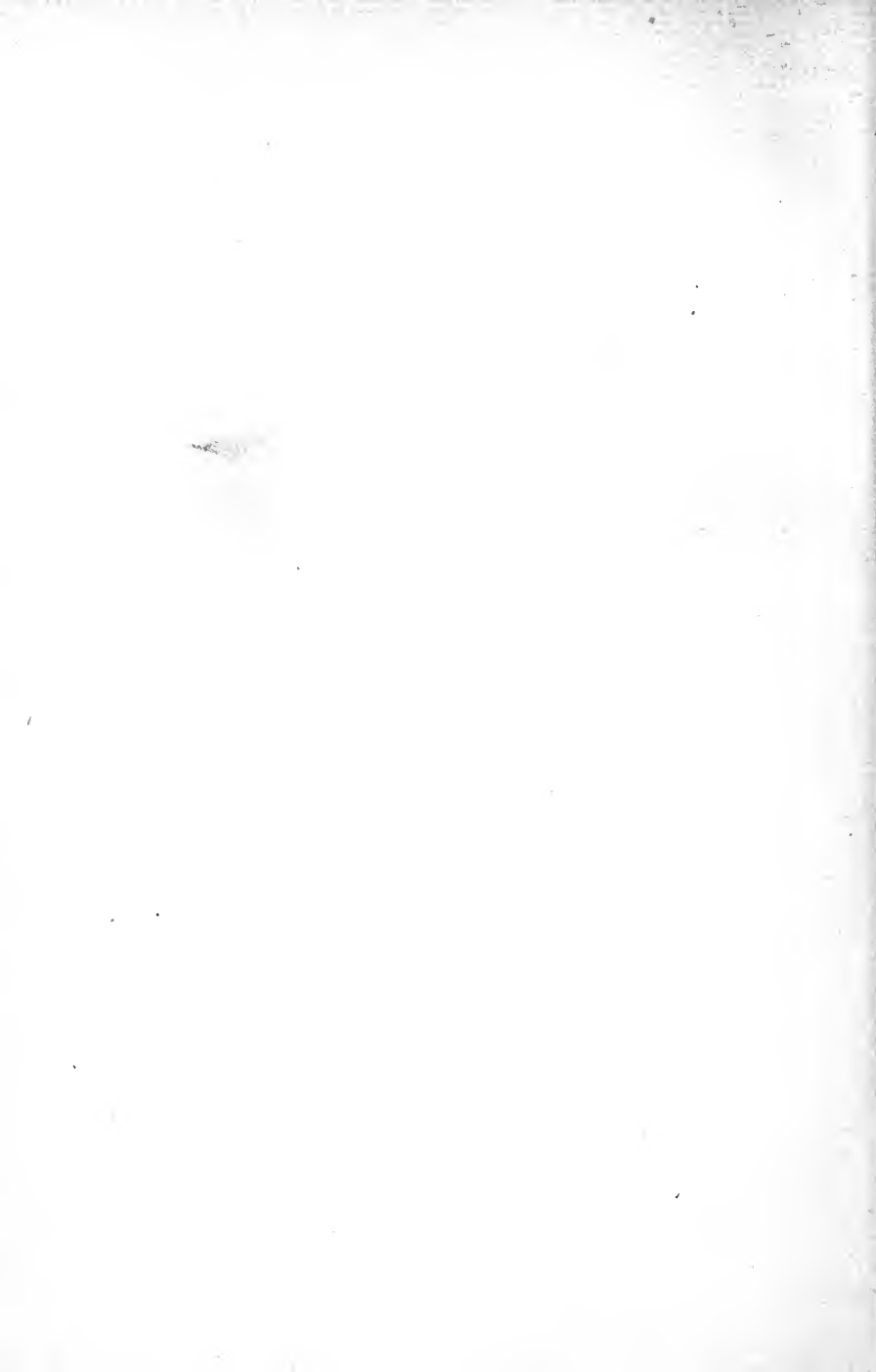
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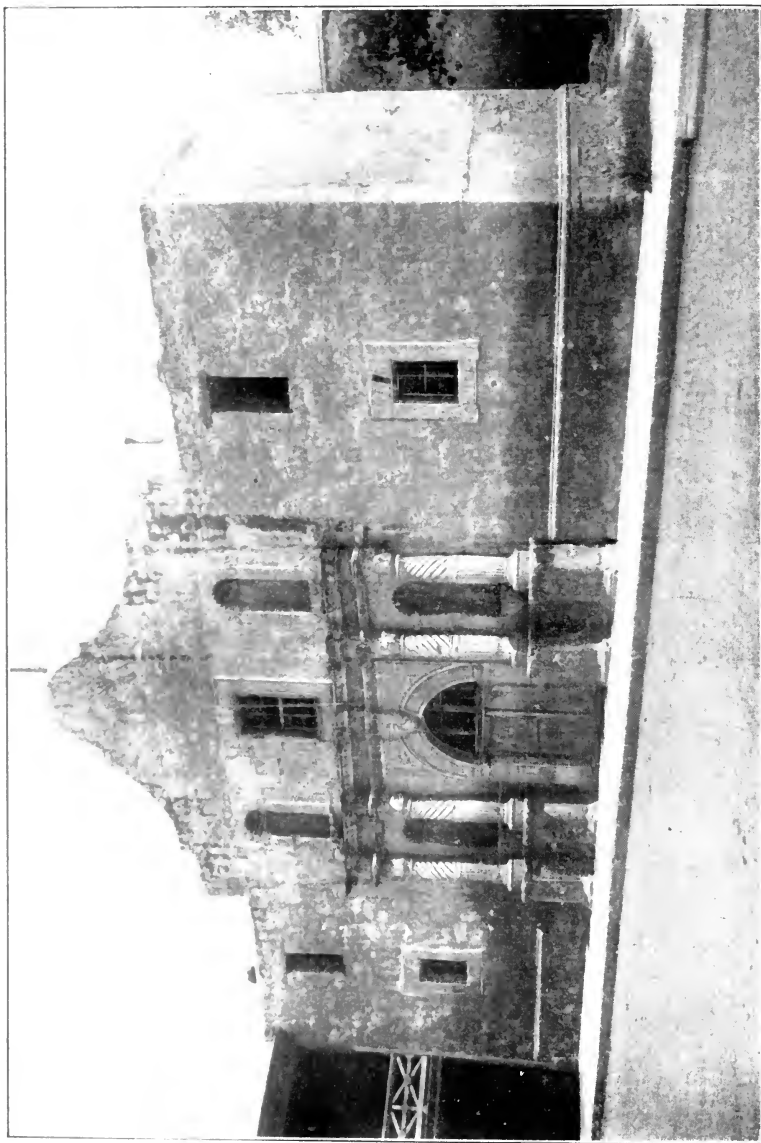
Yours truly

Wallas Talas



In the Alamo





"Thermopylae had its messenger of defeat—the Alamo had none."

In the Alamo

BY OPIE READ

AUTHOR OF

"AN ARKANSAS PLANTER," "JUDGE ELBRIDGE,"
"WATERS OF CANEY FORK," "YANKEE FROM
THE WEST," "BOLANYO," ETC.



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CHAPTER I.

THE CANDIDATE.

I was born in Tennessee, and at the age of sixteen was taken by my parents to Texas. I was bred to the law and before my parents passed away I gave them evidence, let me hope, that I should succeed in a calling which had been selected for me by my father's ambition and my mother's pride. It is well known within the state, and may not be wholly forgotten in Washington, that I served two terms in Congress, where I talked for free trade and stood, as firmly as possible, upon the slippery ground of state's rights. And I believe, having had many positive assurances, that I could have won my way to a third term, but the lower house did not satisfy my ambition. I had learned more than one trick of the statesman's trade and believed that I might

wear the laurels of a senator. Being a politician, I might become a statesman; and it is almost essential for a man to be the former in order ever to become even a semblance of the latter. Not every politician believes himself a statesman, but nearly every politician believes that the public is unable to distinguish the difference between politics and statesmanship.

Among the tricks which I learned was to bow to pride and to pat vanity upon the back; and I discovered that nearly every man who takes an interest in politics believes that he can successfully manage a campaign. Politicians have made themselves familiar, and therefore their "wisdom" is looked upon by the ignorant and the fawning with a certain degree of contempt. But we all of us know that without the experience of politics it would be almost impossible for a man to be a practical statesman.

There was one fact which arose in recollection to condemn my aspirations; my mistakes had all of them been small, when history

teaches that deep men make grave mistakes. However, this was but a far-fetched condemnation, for of course I believed myself competent to face the senate, to stand, at least, in the presence of the average senator. In the house there is more or less of rawness, and in the senate, a noticeable degree of pretentious dullness. In rawness there may be promise, but dullness that pretends to be deep because it is slow and ponderous, is absolutely hopeless. Thus much have I said in excuse for my candidacy.

My announcement appeared on the twentieth of February. The choice was to be made by the legislature in the winter, nearly a year later. I desired to be the first in the field, and I was—forestalling Campwell by three days and Apperson by nearly a week. Of course these gentlemen had a right to grasp at the office. As a general thing, ambition in American public life proves to be harmless. It is not for me to say whether either of these gentlemen was fitted for the place. But I know that I would not, as Campwell did in his card,

declare that I was not only worthy but entitled to the honor. And then he proceeded to define his position on the tariff question, as if every one did not know beforehand. Why will over-weening man mount the moss-grown platform of accepted fact and attempt to thunder? Is any man so devoid of humor as not to know that some truths are so well known to all that we laugh at a man for uttering them? But that was Campwell's affair. It was not my duty to advise him.

Apperson was a different sort of a man; shrewd to a fox-like degree, taciturn at times; and again as talkative as a horse-trader—a hypocrite always. I am not intending this for the closet; it is for the public eye, at some time in the future, and I shall strive hard to tell the truth, just as I feel it.

The first newspaper that took editorial notice of my out-coming was a fairly representative sheet, published near the central part of the state, and this is what it said:

"Ex-Congressman Lucian Howardson has come out as a candidate for the United States

senate, which, however, does not prove that he will be elected. He is a man of ability and a fine politician, impressive in manner, tall and of good size and about thirty-six years of age, with a clean face, broad, closely-shutting mouth and a deep, engaging voice. He has evidently made a close study of our rural friend, particularly of the old-timer, whom he endeavors to please. He speaks of a 'tavern' instead of a hotel, and he always says 'my countrymen' instead of fellow-citizens. The chances are that he will make a strong race, being a tireless worker, but he will find old H. M. Apperson a difficult proposition to overcome."

And this was the first newspaper recognition of the fact that I was a candidate for the senate. But why should it sneer at my way of speaking of an inn or a gathering of voters? Had those little things any bearing upon my fitness for the place? And why should the editor go out of his way to declare that I had a "difficult proposition" in old H. M. Apperson? These are merely trifling inquiries, but they

show my state of mind at the beginning of my candidacy.

I had just put the paper aside when my friend Sam Hall came into the office, where I stood upon the hearth, back to the fire.

"Well, Lucian, they've begun to shoot."

"Yes, with blank cartridges."

"Don't know as to that," said Sam Hall. He was a blunt fellow, a true but not always an encouraging friend. "I don't know," he repeated, "but I thought I heard a bullet whiz right there." He pointed to the paper which I had thrown upon the table.

"What, in his reference to old Apperson?" I asked.

He stood on the hearth beside me, and out of the corner of my eye I saw him shaking his head. "No, in reference to what was said about 'tavern' and 'my countrymen.' It will set fools to watching you, and nearly everything you say, no matter how straight from the heart, will be credited to demagoguery. Is your heart much set on the thing, Lucian?"

He put his hand on my shoulder, and our eyes met in a sharp, sidewise glance.

"Yes, it is the ambition of my—my soul, you might say. Defeat won't kill me, Sam, but I'll pledge you my word that I would rather die than to be beaten."

"You think so," he said, and then we stood in a silence, as to words, but acutely conscious, at least I was and he seemed to be, of the wind whining at the casement and the drowsy muttering of the fire. He removed his hand from my shoulder and I started, so magnetized had we been, standing there together; and I looked at him as he turned to draw up a chair. A cold wind, a "norther," was sweeping over the community and the whole town was shivering. He sat down, thrust forth his feet to the fire, crossed them and after a time repeated: "You think so!"

"I feel it and to feel is to know, Sam. You may argue against a conviction, but not against a feeling."

"But sometimes we think we feel when we don't," he said, gazing steadily into the fire.

"The mind may set itself upon many a thing and recover from many a disappointment, but the heart——" A chunk fell, his gaze was broken; but his fancy had received only a momentary shock, for almost without a pause he continued: "The mind asks for its ambition; the heart begs for its life. Wait till the woman comes, Lucian."

"She did come," I quickly replied. "I am rather astonished that you should have made that remark. Don't you remember Viola Morgan?"

"Very well—married Joe Maghee. Her hair was like shredded copper and——"

"You needn't paint her."

"I wanted to show you that I remembered her."

"Well, don't you think my heart begged her for its life?"

He shook his head. "Not as mine begged, Lucian. The day after you knew that she was forever lost to you, you were here in your office, drawing indictments as prosecuting attorney; and no one would ever have known

the difference, while I—I gave up my practice, went away, wandered up and down the earth, a vagabond, with a dead heart. And it is dead yet, for never since then have I taken any real interest in life. You don't believe that a woman could have that much influence upon you?"

"No, I don't. I love the romantic, and poetry, the beautiful science of words, but I am rather a modern product. And I must go out now and fight in the modern field of politics——"

"In taverns with my countrymen."

"Well, that may not be so modern, but——"

"Where are you going?"

"To San Antonio."

"Well, take care of yourself. No telling what you may bump up against before you get through with this political knight errantry. You'll have to fight many a windmill."

"Yes, on the plain and even in the legislature."

"By the way, before you go. You remember that big Mexican, Loro Dalia, don't you,

the one you sent to the penitentiary for five years? Well, he's out and is slouching about with a hang-dog air, and you'd better look out for him. Well," he added, getting up and giving me his hand, "take care of yourself. I haven't much faith in the outcome of your present undertaking, but my heart—my dead heart—wishes you success."

CHAPTER II.

. THE CRADLE OF VALOR.

San Antonio. Nowhere on the continent of America is there a city so full of a peculiar interest, so quaintly attractive. On the one hand a relic of the early determination of the Church to Romanize the Indian, on the other the phonograph whining the ephemeral "coon" song of today. Here an adobe house, with legend and dark-hued romance clinging to the eaves; there a modish club wherein stricken millionaires, lungless but full of hope, win one another's money. Winding through the city is a river, with many bridges, and a creek, a Styx, flowing blue between Mexican past and Texas future. The Mexican side is the setting for an opera intended to be serious, but humorous in excess of gravity. At night on the plaza, in the blurred light of a lantern which,

from a distance, looks like a magnified firefly, sits the Chili queen, with persuading eye and voice melodious, making music with the mention of her merchandise; and near her sits her lord, master, tyrant, rolling his cigarette. From the diminutive houses, flush with the sidewalks, comes the tinkle of Spanish love rhythm; and naturally one would expect the entire plaza to break out in preconcerted chorus; but out there, though they seem to have dressed for it, they are not waiting for the festivities commemorative of the birth of the Duke's daughter. Oveta's eyes may look opera, and in her soft and enticing tones there may be a sweetness too delicate to be entrapped and put down in the prompter's book, but she wants to exchange meat, meal and corn husk for money.

The sunlight brings the broadening charm of completer revelation, houses after the style of some Spanish picture book; a plaza, not marked off by the calculating surveyor but shaped by grace-loving chance—and here a mission nearly two centuries old—an altar

where the wild man sniffed a strange scent and for the first time heard of a woman's son who gave his life for him. But what is this, so old in the new shadow thrown by progress? It is the Alamo, frowning as if in all these years its war-ruffled countenance had not been smoothed. The leisure life, gathered from many cities in the east, sojourns about it, for its door-yard, another piece of chance grace, is one of the most charming gardens in the land; and nearby commerce has reared her mansions. But for him who loves his country there is no science-tended garden, no handsome structures—but only the rough walls of the old church, the grandest cradle that ever rocked American valor to the full maturity of immortal glory. And who of us can muse upon it without pride and emotion? Fewer than two hundred men fighting an army—Travis, Bowie and old David Crockett, whose Tennessee humor enlivened the dull hum of Congress. And how grim that humor was to Santa Anna! Appeals for assistance had been sent out; a small band of heroes had responded, but for the most

part the messengers had been slaughtered, and now all was hopeless. No, there was a hope. Let Colonel Travis tell what it was: "Our fate is sealed. Within a few hours we must be in eternity. . . In the honest and simple confidence of heart I have transmitted your promises of help and my confident hope of success. But the promised help has not come and our hopes are not to be realized. . . Our friends were evidently not informed of our perilous position in time to save us. . . Then we must die. . . Our business is not to make a fruitless effort to save our lives, but to choose the manner of our death. But three modes are presented to us; let us choose that by which we may best serve our country. Shall we surrender and be shot without taking the life of a single enemy? Shall we try to cut our way through the Mexican ranks and be butchered before we can kill more than twenty of our adversaries? I am opposed to either method. . . Let us resolve to withstand our enemies to the last, and each to kill as many of them as possible. And when at

last they shall storm our fortress, let us kill them as they come! Kill them as they scale our walls! Kill them as they leap within! Kill them as they raise their weapons to use them! Kill them as they kill our companions! And continue to kill them as long as any of us remain alive.”* So the man had a hope, not that he might escape death, but that in dying he might kill as many as possible of his enemies. The bloodiest death was the one to be chosen. This was the truest of patriotism, for to kill was to serve country. But in this he did not enforce his authority as commander. He would leave it to individual decision, and drawing a line upon the ground with his sword, he told his men that he was going to stay in the fort even if he had to stay alone, that each man might do as he choose, but that those who should so elect within themselves to remain with him—that such men would please step across the sword-drawn line. And a man named Tapley Holland leaped the line and cried out that he

*“Origin and Fall of the Alamo,” by Col. John S. Ford.

was willing to die for his country. Then every man in the line stepped forward—no, all but one, a man named Rose; all the sick who could walk or crawl passed over, and Jim Bowie, down with fever, cried out: "Boys, I am not able to come to you, but I wish some of you would be so kind as to move my cot over there." Four companions sprang to his cot and bore it over the line, the equator of courage; and at last every man had crossed save Rose, who stood back deeply affected, but without the exalted courage to take his place in the death-squad of heroism. But no one reproached him. Virtue may be acquired, and pride and reason sometimes gather courage, but bravery must have been born with the blood. In kindly tones Bowie spoke to Rose, who replied: "I am not prepared to die, and shall not do so if I can avoid it." And then old Crockett spoke, with drollery in his voice and his eyes whimsically winking, we may well imagine: "Might as well conclude to die with us, old man;" just as in his Tennessee home he would have said to a neighbor: "Don't be snatched, old man—stay

and eat a bite with me." Rose climbed the wall and escaped, and while we must deplore his weakness yet we are indebted to him for a part of the story of the Alamo.

The last assault began at daylight and ended at nine o'clock. Then a stillness fell, so profound that the drip, drip of heroic blood could be heard. Sergeant Becerra, a Mexican, gave this account of the scene: "It was a fearful sight. Our lifeless soldiers covered the ground surrounding the Alamo. They were heaped inside the fortress. Blood and brains covered the earth and the floor and had splattered the walls. The ghastly faces of our comrades met our gaze and we removed them with desperate hearts. Our loss in front of the Alamo was represented as two thousand killed and more than three hundred wounded. The killed were generally struck on the head. The wounds were in the neck or shoulder, seldom below that. The firing of the besieged was fearfully precise. When a Texas rifle was leveled on a Mexican he was considered as good as dead. All this indicated the dauntless

bravery and the cool self-possession of the men who were engaged in the hopeless conflict with an enemy numbering more than twenty to one. They inflicted on us a loss ten times greater than they sustained. The victory of the Alamo was dearly bought. Indeed, the price in the end was well-nigh the ruin of Mexico."

Two thousand killed! Well had the heroes' hope been realized. And what a shrine was there consecrated to American valor! The glory of bravery ought to belong to brave men everywhere, but how strangely ignorant the world is of this battle! And even in the education of the American youth, deserving stress is not put upon it. He is taught to revere the pilgrim fathers, whose bravery was largely fanaticism and whose piety reached out to tie a rope about the Quaker's neck. The fathers of Texas were not sustained with the intolerant fever of the ultra religionists. Their achievements were cool and deliberate—the result of pure nerve.

My room in the tavern looked out upon the Alamo, and early, the first morning after my

arrival, I sat gazing upon it, with the scenes of the fight aglow in my mind, when a card was brought up. It bore the name of John Quailes, reporter, secretary of numerous societies and general promoter of things necessary. And when he came in I could have sworn that he was rehearsing for a "cake walk." Of about the medium height, thirty, smooth of face, not wanting in color, frocked in a coat noticeably long, with low-cut waistcoat and long tie tucked into the opening of his shirt—these marks, bearing and dress, surely fulfilled their mission, that of demanding attention. I could not suppress a smile, and quickly perceiving both the smile and my effort, he spoke pleasantly with his hand thrust forth: "That's all right. Laugh if you want to—no offense." I shook hands with him. He placed his hat on the table, took off his remaining glove (the first one having been removed as he was doing his cake walk toward me), put it and mate into the hat, sat down, leaned forward, put his hand on my arm and said:

"You're all right. Tote fair with me and I'll tote fair with you. You can be of use to me. As you may know, or if you don't you may soon find out, I am the best newspaper man in the State. I don't say this to blow about myself but as a matter for your own information and guidance. And whenever you have anything that's worth printing, give it to me. Don't run the risk of letting any one spoil it. See? I am the Secretary of the State Central Committee and I shall continue to be as long as they want an efficient man. How's your outlook?"

"Very good, I think."

"Don't talk like that—it's too modest. In the bustling affairs of this life modesty means defeat. What you want is assurance. Then comes confidence and enthusiastic work. I've looked over the field and I have decided that I'll give my allegiance to you. This is not a contest to return an old incumbent, he having retired from public life, but the selection of a new man, and as that man you strike me about right. At the proper time, and I'll be on

the spot, I may spring something on our opponents—something like an indiscreet letter. They all write them sooner or later, and when you lay for your opponent's letters, you are doing yourself a great service. And this leads me to the fact that I want you to write a letter for me—not one, however, that will in the least compromise you. Will you listen to a very brief—affair?"

I told him that I would, and with a long breath of satisfaction he leaned back in his chair, was silent for a few moments, and then began:

"I fell deeply in love with her and I said to myself that if I didn't win her my life wouldn't be worth a penny; that my richly developing mind would cease to—pulsate. The girl was willing enough, I discovered after an association of two weeks, during which our relationship consisted of glimpses, sighs and a hastily spoken word, now and then, so keenly alert was the mother—oh, but the mother! She was opposed and we found ourselves against a snag, for the girl is frightened to death at the

idea of marrying without her mother's consent. Senator, have you gathered a good idea of the situation?"

"Yes, but I don't see how I can be of any use to you."

"Possibly not, but I do. I will write the girl's mother this sort of a letter. Now listen. 'My Dear Madam: As you know, Lucian Howardson is soon to be elected United States Senator from this State. He is an able, moral and therefore highly influential man, and it is with pleasure that I herewith enclose a letter which he has been kind enough to write concerning my character and general fitness as a husband for the most charming young woman alive—your daughter.' Now, all I ask of you, Senator, is that you write that letter. What do you say?"

I knew what to say but I did not say it. I ought flatly to have said no, but I didn't. How strongly was I now governed by the diplomacy of politics!

"Most any time will do, I suppose," I re-

plied, trying to gird up my resolution to deny him the absurd favor.

"Well, no, I want to send it off today." He arose and, standing in front of me, began to meter his talk with motions of his forefinger. "Now, you are not running the slightest bit of risk. Either of the other candidates would do it in a moment and thank me most gratefully for the opportunity. But I want you because you are going to be elected; and the letter would be a good thing to show in after years. I'll ring for writing material—no, there's some on the table."

He was so confident, so enthusiastic, and withal so free in the expression of his preference for me that I had not the heart to douche him with cold water. I wrote the letter to the dear old lady, not mincingly, but with a fullness of statement that caused him tightly to grip my hand and sigh from the depth of his gratitude.

"You have a fine view of the old Alamo," he said, folding his "character" and putting

it into his pocket. "You have been in it many a time, I reckon?"

"No, not many a time, only once, but I am going again. I am a stranger in this city, you know."

"Yes. In our marvelous State two congressional districts may be a thousand miles apart, but the Senator's mantle must spread over the entire country. But, Lucian, you are going to get there. Of course you are going to make a speech here and I want it as soon as you can give it to me—and by the way, come right over to the Alamo and dictate something."

CHAPTER III.

A MEETING IN THE ALAMO.

It was still early and there were not many persons in the lobby of the hotel, but Quailes pulled me by the sleeve from time to time as we were passing through, to introduce a noted cattle man, a wool raiser, a young fellow who had caught the largest tarpon ever seen on the Texas coast, and a boy, the noted bootblack of the city. And he found as much pleasure in the ceremony as if he were leading forward high potentates of the land, and I did not think the less of him for it.

‘Oh, I run with the best of them,’ said he. “To catch me a man must have done something or have an ambition that promises something. I don’t recognize inherited greatness. See that fellow? Best hackman in the State. And he

might be of use to us. Oh, say, Jim, come here."

When I had shaken hands with the hackman, who said, "bet your life" in response to Quailes' declaration that I should be elected, we went straightway to the Alamo. The sun was pouring upon it, and about its sullen eaves birds, moved to music, were sweetly twittering. I halted at the portal to gaze upon the carving, the work of a graceful chisel. Two ladies passed through the doorway. One had just crossed the line of middle life, the other a model of grace; but I do not think that I should have paid to them the contribution of even a passing attention had not the young woman sprung out as if unconsciously to challenge comparison with the work of the artist. They turned into the first room on the right and Quailes followed them. I walked down the main room, where the ground had once been red with as brave blood as ever enriched the earth, and had halted to look at a niche in the wall where the monk was wont to put his midnight lamp, when Quailes came hastily to me and said that the

A MEETING IN THE ALAMO. 27

two ladies desired an introduction to me. I had no time to hang back; he seized my arm and conducted me to Bowie's room wherein he lay with fever and wherein his cot had been brought across the line which the commander had traced with his sword. And then I was presented to Mrs. Acklin, and her daughter Zaleme. We shook hands, after the warm-hearted manner of Texas, and though there was no especial restraint, yet it did not seem to me that they had importuned Quailes for the introduction. The mother was a woman in whose quiet manner there might be much authority. She was slightly gray, very soft of voice, a presence to suggest the word "mother." Her expression was a sort of calm sadness which comes with long contemplation of religion—not a sadness, perhaps, but a semi-holiness. It was some moments before I suffered my eyes to fill themselves with the young woman. As I look back now I know that I was struck with a sudden trepidation, as if I were about to look upon a fascinating trouble. But I filled my eyes with her. How black was her hair, and her eyes

might have come from Egypt. Her complexion was rich rather than fair, and her lips looked as if they had been stained with the juice of the old mission grape. I know that this is more of rhapsody than description, but who can describe a delight? I can say that she was tall, yes, and gracefully moving off in one direction when you had expected her to move in another—that in nearly everything she was forestalling and a surprise, and if not meeting expectation in one thing surpassing it in all things. Sometimes her smile was slow, and sometimes it was like a flash of lightning; and at one moment I thought that I had known her always, and then that I never had and never could know her. And with strange perversity she reminded me of numerous women whom I had almost loved, and sent my mind back in a harrassing and fruitless search to find them. Her—but I am rhapsodizing again.

“Bowie died in this room,” said I, and Quailes cried out, “You bet he did;” and I looked at this wondrous creature, expecting that she must have fainted. But she had not;

she was smiling. "He is what my father would call a case," she said. "And he is so amusing, almost shockingly entertaining. Yes, here is where Bowie died, and out there," she added, waving her hand, "is where old Crockett was found, surrounded by his enemies."

"I am proud of him," I said.

"You are?" she spoke up.

"Yes, I am a Tennessean."

"Oh! And blood from my State was spilled here. I am from Kentucky."

"And in this corner," said I, "may have been held a weird religious ceremony, just before the final slaughter, for some of those heroes must have been church members, and—" I looked at her and silence fell upon my tongue. With hands clasped she was gazing at the corner, and her lips were shut so close that they were traced by a waving line, and her breath was deep and slow. I looked toward Quailes. He and Mrs. Acklin were talking over a photograph which evidently he had just taken from his pocket. I turned again to the young woman. She had not changed her attitude nor the ex-

pression of her countenance; like the devotee of a mystic religion, suddenly smitten with an inward reproach for not having discharged the duty due from the soul to a higher spirit, she stood, oblivious of the world—of me. The mother looked around, with the photograph in her hand as if to speak, but instantly she turned away and in a low tone spoke to Quailes. So she must have seen that attitude, that devotion, before; and respecting it, gave to it her sanction.

Quailes called out something to me, and the young woman moved, walked out into the large room, and I followed her as far as the door, through which I could see her as slowly she walked, meditating, towards the far end of the chapel. Presently she came back, almost completely changed, her lips apart and her eyes almost merry. I expected some sort of explanation, but she offered none, not a word, and then I wondered whether she had been conscious of her devotional reverie. Quailes came forward with the photograph and, handing it to her, said:

“Now Miss Zaleme, there’s a girl—a girl

right, you might say. And your mother, here, says my taste is good."

"Yes," said Mrs. Acklin, "and if all your selections are to be marked by a similar judgment you must surely become a reference for——"

"I wonder if you are guying me."

"Guying?" she repeated her face brightening with surprise.

"Mother doesn't guy," said the daughter, returning the photograph. "Yes, a very good looking girl, I should say."

"Well, I should say you should."

"How long have you known her, Mr. Quailes?"

"Oh, I haven't met her but a few times, but when I meet people I meet 'em. I am what you might call a quick and effective meeter. I said to her, 'Young woman, you may not realize it, being young and inexperienced, but fate is standing right here talking to you:' she blushed, for she realized the fact, but her mother is one of these fate-fighting women—she objected, but it will be all right now, for

no one can deny the fact that my friend, Lucian Howardson, is going to the Senate, and he has given me a letter that will curl the old lady's hair. I'll read it to you."

I protested but the ladies mischievously insisted, and Quailes, declaring that not even the opposition of a Senator should prevail against the wishes of ladies, especially in Texas, read the letter. Mrs. Acklin turned to me: "How generous of you—such praise. You must have known Mr. Quailes a long time."

I stammered, but Quailes blurted out: "Never met him personally until this morning, but of course I knew him by reputation, and was willing to give him my confidence to the extent of suggesting this letter. But say, Lucian, we've got a good many men to meet to-day and must therefore bid the ladies a reluctant good morning. Madam," he continued, speaking to Mrs. Acklin, "do not include me when you meditate upon the evil that men do, but remember me as a man always looking higher. Miss Zaleme, still hoping that your stay in our city may be full of pleasant dreams

A MEETING IN THE ALAMO. 33.

and awakenings none the less joyous, I wish you good morning."

I looked straight and searchingly into the young woman's eyes as I took her hand upon parting, and she met my gaze as steadily as if she had been a school-fellow. I had not impressed her as a Quail might have done—she did not seem to feel that fate had taken her hand.

CHAPTER IV.

ADVISED WITH ME.

The politician must cultivate geographical friendships. He must have his coaling stations. I had not neglected San Antonio. Several of its prominent citizens had in well-considered days been warmed into a preference for me, and I did not think I had taken an advantage of them. Someone must represent them, and if I had convinced them, even by design, that I was the proper man, then I had shown no lack of sincerity and had no apologies to offer. These reflections led me to the remark that the office seeker, to appear strong and conscientious, must "square" himself with himself.

In my room a number of friends gathered to advise with me and to assure me of success. Anthony Hotze, fat, red, curly-haired

and oily under a silk hat, was a typical henchman. Years ago he had come from New York in search of lungs and had acquired a stomach, and covering it with a beflowered vest, was proud of himself. To any cause which he might espouse Hotze contributed a certain weakness. But no one could frown upon his allegiance; he was so interested, so solicitous and so hopeful that it would have been brutal to scout at him. In any gathering, those most concerned in the success of a cause were stricken with nervous anxiety whenever he began to speak and drew deep sighs when he left off. He possessed much ill-assorted information, a jumble of learning, picked up here and there and unfortunately never forgotten. He would refer to "this Cincinnatus, leaving his ax and coming out to save his country." And within a few moments after coming to me with his "allegiance" he said: "Gentlemen, I want to tell you that to me the outcome is perfectly plain. The boys here will tell you that I have never gone wrong on a prize fight or an election; and I say Howardson is going to win the

battle. It is a Mookerheyde, with its result already foretold in the clouds."

My friend Haney spoke up, "Hotze, being from Manhattan Island, you must necessarily have a smattering of Dutch history, but at Mookerheyde the patriot army was defeated and Louis of Nassau was killed. Justice was crushed, while on this occasion we hope that justice will win."

"My dear fellow," Hotze replied, in no wise put out, "that is a figure, and you've got to give a figure plenty of lee room; the minute you begin to cramp it," he added, leaning over and letting his hand fall upon my knee, "you destroy its—I might say, force. We want to meet the boys and——"

"In this contest," Haney interrupted, "it is not a question of meeting the boys. We are not running for Alderman; we want to go to the Senate."

"That's all right in its way," Hotze persisted, "but this thing is mainly to be settled by primaries, and if the boys don't run the primaries I don't know who does."

"We will make our arrangements for an address to be delivered in the opera house," said Haney to me, "and if you do as well as I have heard you, we will catch the people. We—"

He was interrupted by the coming of a man named Briggs. He came to tell me that while he was an Apperson man and would do anything to insure his election, yet he wished me well. He had called merely to let me know where he stood. I could have told him that never having heard of him I did not know that he stood at all. But a certain degree of respect is due to frankness, and he aspired to the distinction of open enmity. However, he lingered after having announced his mission. He asked numerous questions, as to my views on this and that.

Haney cleared his throat. "I beg your pardon," he said to Briggs, "but for one who has no interest in our affairs, you're taking up a good deal of our time."

Briggs smiled. "A man who aspires to serve the people in a high position ought to answer the people's questions."

"Well," Haney rejoined, "we'll answer our share and let your man Apperson answer the rest."

Briggs said that he would go, but he did not just at that time; he came back after reaching the door, reaffirmed his preference for Apperson, but hoped that I would make myself at home while in the city, even though the city would undoubtedly give its support to another man. And then he took his leave. How easily a candidate is elated or depressed. A word or even a look may haunt him; and while I had no faith in the judgment of Briggs, yet he tied a weight about my neck and I wore it during the remainder of the day; but it fell off at night, for many a warm hand came to clasp mine, and to me was spoken many a resonant and stirring word of encouragement. During the evening I held a continuous reception in the lobby of the tavern, and I was tired when late at night I went up to my room. I sat down to think over my chances, and I felt that they were good. Suddenly I seemed to hear the name Zaleme—I could almost have sworn that it was whis-

pered warm in my ear; and then I remembered that I had forgotten her, during all the hours of the afternoon and night. But my nerves must have been keyed taut when she twanged them like strings. And upon leaving her I had fancied that I had been deeply wounded by her, for often an impression is but a wound! Looking back over that brief lapse of time I could not then see her as clearly as afterward she stood in my memory, gazing into the corner where brave blood had flowed for country. Was she handsome? I could not determine, for her face eluded me. I could see her lips and eyes; and I knew that her complexion was not pale, that she was graceful; but I could not grasp her in my mind. Once I thought I had, but her lips parted in a white and scarlet smile and she was gone, a shadow graceful in the air.

It was past midnight when Quailes came with the proof sheet of an interview with me, more than a column in length; and I shuddered as I took it, for glancing at it I saw that in its conversational form I was made to speak for myself. But I was soon greatly relieved, for it

was well expressed and dignified in tone. "Of course the paper won't let me say anything, but I can print what you say," he observed, and then added: "Don't have to choke a political situation to death in order to kill it, you know."

I had offered a chair but he had not sat down; he stood looking at me, posing as if to begin his "cake walk." "Sit down, I want to talk to you."

"All right," he said, and sat down. I spoke of Miss Acklin, of her strange reverie in the Alamo. He had not noticed it. Was it, then, a freak of my own fancy? In his opinion she was a young woman of good common sense, and not more than ordinarily good looking. She had a brother, a prominent physician, living in San Antonio, and she and her mother were visiting him.

"By the way," I remarked, "you said that they wanted to meet me. Had they requested an introduction?"

"Oh, no, but the fact is that nearly everybody wants to meet my friends. One of my principal characteristics is to have friends that people

want to meet. Choosing friends ought to be numbered among the sciences—and if I were the main guy of a university I would include it in the curriculum. I know the Doctor very well—he's under obligations to me. When he cuts off a leg, an arm or even a finger, I publish the fact. Do you want to go out there and call on Miss Zaleme?"

"Well, I don't know."

"If you don't know, you do, of course. I'll make the engagement."

"Wait until after I have appeared at the opera house as the champion of the people."

"All right; and I'll see that she comes to the speaking. But at present I guess we both need sleep."

He went away and I sat in the window, looking out upon the Alamo, frowning in the moonlight.

CHAPTER V.

LIKED THE SPEECH.

The speech was done and numerous persons were coming forward to shake hands with me, as I stood upon the stage; and my eyes wandered about in search of a face, for Quailes had come to me and told me that she was there. Women as well as men came to encourage me, and I wondered why she held aloof. Surely she could have no interest in me, and if she had not, why should I care to call upon her at her brother's house? Ah, she came, with her brother, and held out her hand, saying that she was pleased to meet me again; and when the brother had assured me that my speech had won his good will, I was elated. But why had I questioned myself concerning her? I found I could talk to her in a matter-of-fact manner, with no suggestion of emotional re-

straint; and looking into her eyes I remembered her school-fellow frankness in meeting eye with eye. And so, she was now an acquaintance, to be perhaps a friend. It must be true that after passing the age of thirty-five some men are afraid lest they meet the "right" woman. I remember to have heard a man cry out: "Merciful Lord, and must I marry her?" "Then why, if you are so alarmed," some one spoke out. "I can't help it. Why, confound her, she has poisoned me." The grand passion, to be dreaded by all men and deplored by all women, was upon him. And now, as I stood talking to this woman, I wondered if she could poison me with those eyes. The Doctor was drawn apart from us by a thin-breasted refugee from the North.

"Have you been to our shrine since I saw you there? The Alamo."

"*Our* shrine! Mine. Oh," she cried, with a decided change of manner, "I understand—the blood of Kentucky and Tennessee. Yes, our shrine. No, I have not been there since I saw you. What a fine audience you had," she said,

looking off toward the front door, where people were still massed.

"Yes," singularly quick. "I hope I pleased you."

"Oh, yes, I'm easily pleased—I mean you did."

I had turned my eyes away. I did not wish to view her in the redness of her embarrassment. Yes, I let her blush, and when I fancied that she was cooled I looked at her, and upon my honor I could have sworn that she had not blushed at all.

"How long do you expect to remain in San Antonio?" I asked.

"Oh, until mother gets tired. As for myself, it makes no difference. But I suppose that within a few weeks we shall go for a short time to Riplar, a little old town off in the timber, they tell me. Perhaps you know where it is."

"Yes, I live there."

"Oh, do you? Are you acquainted with Andrew Carson?"

"Yes; he is one of our stanchest citizens."

"He is mother's brother. I'm glad you know him. What sort of a town is it?"

"It is built upon a rise of red ground and has the appearance of being old."

"And I suppose I can walk out into the wooded country. I don't like cities, or even towns. I love the country, and I should be happy never to see another pavement. If I were to tell you of one of the most enjoyable occasions in my memory you would laugh at me, I'm sure. It was while I was in Georgia, a long time ago, wading barefoot in the cotton seed in a cotton pen. Isn't that a glorious thing to remember?"

"Yes, if it gave you such pleasure. One of my keenest enjoyments is something similar, at least no more notable—dropping like a turtle from a log into the river."

We could talk without emotion, I could; and she had no thought of restraint. And in those eyes there might be poison for some one, but not for me. Was it my parting talk with old Sam Hall that inspired a sudden mistrust of women? But we had held such talks on more

than one occasion, at times when his wounds were agape and bleeding, and I had not been made alert with any sort of fear.

Together we walked toward the entrance, around by the side passage way, she in front talking pleasantly, looking back at times; and I wondered why I thought of that old liar, Sir John Maundeville, who said that in the countries which he had visited there were women with jewels in their eyes with which they could look and kill. I didn't know how far away the Doctor lived, and perhaps I might walk home with her; but she had come with the Doctor in his buggy—the distance, I learned, was several miles; and so the fragile hope of a moon-lighted stroll was blown away like the down of the cottonwood tree. But something had been accomplished, I thought—as I walked across the plaza toward the hotel—permission to call upon her the following evening. I was bold enough to analyze the interest which I felt in her; and I knew that it was nothing except a desire to know more of her. I reminded myself of a coin collector and she a strange coin. But there

was no desire for possession. How lightly she had sprung into the buggy, and how she had appeared to dance on the sidewalk, so agile was she upon her feet. Was it a spiritual or physical lightness? And my spirit rose with her as she sprang into the buggy, and in my breast was the thrilling flutter that comes when we swing, described by a boy who said that he liked it because it made him feel glad. In my speech I had achieved success, I felt it; and yet how little was I thrilled. At the hotel a number of voters were waiting to greet me, among them Briggs, my open-faced enemy. "You did very well," he said, giving me a cool shake of the hand. "Yes, sir, I have heard your effort favorably spoken of. You are well calculated to catch the popular fancy, still the statesman——"

"Popular fancy is of the masses of the people," I broke in. "And I don't care to be elected unless I am the choice of the people."

This may have been buncombe of the cheapest order, and perhaps it was, but the bystanders applauded and Briggs withdrew. Shortly

afterward I went to my room and wrote thus to old Sam Hall: "You are a man of wisdom and experience, but I don't believe in your theories. I believe that a man with the proper estimation of himself can entrench and battlement his heart against any woman in the world. The grand passion may come upon a very young man, but the man who has arrived at the sensible age—let us say thirty-five—wants companionship. You can't put off any of your grand passion upon him. Mind you, I don't say that love, even powerful love, does not exist. It seems to be necessary in order that art and literature may be carried to the tower in the seventh heaven of exaltation. But it is an insanity, which, as science advances, will be treated as a disease. You remember old Andrew Carson, whose money is good but hard to get. He has a sister, who is at present visiting her son here. She is a very pleasant woman, refined, and with that quiet sweet air which we of the South like to believe belongs to our women more than to the women of any other land; and I am prepared to say

that it is a fact. She is coming to Riplar and I wish you would call on her. I am getting along first-rate in my campaign work; have shaken a thousand hands and a few prejudices. Tonight I made a speech at the opera house, and every time I repeat it I can count on new friends. I met this Mrs. Acklin in the Alamo, and was introduced by a reporter named John Quailes, a peculiar duck, you would term him; but he is all right and a good friend to the cause. I wish that you had seen the enthusiasm of the audience tonight, not that you would have had cause to feel proud of your friend, but that you would have received a glimpse of the possibility of his election, for enthusiasm in this cosmopolitan city means much. I forgot to mention that Mrs. Acklin is accompanied by her daughter, a young woman of about twenty-five."

I had sealed my letter and was gazing at it listlessly when there came a rap at my door. Quailes came in full of enthusiasm, not indeed over my speech, but over the fact that he had made four columns of it. He declared that he

couldn't possibly "go stale" on such an occasion, but that when he began to "round up" his material he surprised himself. And after a time he looked at me and said: "I want to tell you something that perhaps some people don't know. There isn't any accident about me; I am all design, my talk and dress. Suppose I were to dress like other men. Who'd notice me? Nobody. I would simply belong to the herd. With some men eccentricity is a vanity, but with me it is business. I want people to remember me, and I impress myself on them. And then if they have anything worth printing and I am around they give it to me. I am naturally modest, and I tried modesty for a number of years, but I want to tell you it won't work. You caught the Doctor all right tonight. I sat where I could see the girl and I know she was deeply interested."

"What girl?"

"Miss Zaleme, of course. Wasn't she the only girl there so far as you were concerned? I thought you were a married man until you began to take such notice of her."

"Take notice of her ! Why, Quailes, I haven't taken any particular notice of her. I am a man of too much experience to take decided notice on short acquaintance. I haven't taken any vows, but long ago I resolved to remain a bachelor. Once I was on the eve of marrying a woman of striking appearance, and a woman who would be of great advantage to me in this campaign. But she grew tired of waiting, and in the meantime we discovered that instead of lovers we were simply confidential friends."

"And they are sometimes material for happy marriages," said Quailes. "I don't know that it's a good idea to marry a passion, for that sort of thing can't last." He put back his arms, yawned and added : "I had a passion once and I tried to kill myself over it; and there never was a more disappointed and disgusted human being than I was when I found that my plan of self-destruction had been thwarted. Yes, sir, I wanted to die. But this girl I have now inspires rest and peace. I want to sit down by her and look away off yonder, holding her hand, and not care whether the cows come

home or not. There are two sorts of love, you know—the whisper love and the roar love—and I don't want any more of the latter. But dropping the subject of love for a moment (we can always pick it up again, you know), I want you to take breakfast with me about ten o'clock tomorrow morning. Among the many remarkable features about this ancient town is an old German who has cooked for three Mexican Presidents and one Emperor of Mexico. He serves the finest beef steak that man ever tasted—has a secret. It doesn't appear to make any difference what sort of steak he has; it's in the cooking. He has been offered a small fortune for his secret, but he won't sell it. He says he'd rather leave it to his children than to leave them money. Now, I know it may be out of place to branch off at such length on a beef steak during the anxieties of a senatorial campaign, but whenever a man can get the best in the world of anything, why, he owes it to himself to get it. Well, I've made a speech nearly as long as yours, and I won't keep you

up any longer. By the way, you made an engagement to go out yonder tomorrow night, didn't you?"

"Yes, I said I *might* call. By the way, Quailles, have you any idea what it is about the Alamo that is so sacred to her? I spoke of it as our shrine, and forgetfully she cried out '*Mine.*' And then she said, 'Oh, yes, the blood of Kentucky and Tennessee.' Have you any notion as to what she meant?"

"No, but I guess I can find out."

"I wish you would, that is, casually, for of course it is of no particular importance."

He bade me good-night, giving me a look that I did not exactly like, and went whistling down the hall. And he had tried to kill himself!

CHAPTER VI.

WAITING AND IMPATIENT.

The next morning I was deep in the study of a question that lay close to the interest of the people and which, mastered, must set me high in their esteem, when Quailes came to remind me that I had an engagement to eat a beef steak. I asked him if it were so very important and he answered, "Vital." Questions could be studied at any time, but a steak cooked by that old fellow had to be spoken for in advance, and the arrangements had been made.

I went with him to a place that looked like a deserted market house. I learned that it had once been a seat of government, having been built by the Spaniards at a time which now is almost ancient. In the center of a broad open space was the gastronomic shrine, and the altar

was an old cook stove. About it, describing a square, was a counter, or rather a breast-high shelf. There was no cloth. There were several stools and they were the only furniture. Quailes introduced me to the old man, who, with his wife, stood in the pen formed by the shelves. He was told that I was to be the next United States Senator from Texas, and he replied that it made no difference to him, he would give me a good steak. Somewhere within him there must have been a strata of humor. I learned that he bought a certain number of steaks each day, and that when the supply was exhausted he closed up, or rather went away, and that no inducement could draw him back to his place of business. Quailes told me to watch him. He raked coals of fire out into the apron of the stove, remarking that for fuel he used only the mesquite bush, that any other wood spoiled a steak. His wife stood near, watching him as if with reverence. When the fire had been arranged to his notion he took up a piece of beef, put it upon a block, patted it affectionately with the broad side of a cleaver,

turned it over and patted the other side. Then he placed it upon the gridiron. I asked Quailes if the old fellow's secret lay in the manner of his patting, and he replied: "Now see what he is doing." The old man had taken up a tin can, and with a spoon was pouring a clear liquid on the meat, and the steak, which I had observed was thin, at once arose to astonishing thickness. He stood gazing intently, and at the proper moment turned and treated the other side with the liquid. And when the steak was served I could have cut it with a spoon, and the juice was as the essence of some delicious fruit ripened in an air heavy with sweet odors; and the meat itself was like unto the butter of a prize cow fed upon spicewood leaves and the bloom of the wild honeysuckle. I looked at the old man, and he stood watching me with a smile upon his face. Quailes was busy with what he termed a luscious assignment. "Eating is vulgar enough," said he, pausing a moment in his exercises, "but since it must be done let us make a poetry of it. This juice would have converted the other thief on the cross.

You may think I'm extravagant, but you ought to hear some of these other fellows. And here comes one of them now, the Doctor, by the way."

I shook hands with Dr. Acklin, giving him a tight grip; he was slow and precise of speech, weighing his words and seeming to tilt the scales to make them heavy, but I listened to him with great interest. The old man went about the preparation of his steak, which, I learned, had been engaged the day before, and the Doctor, beginning to talk about it, forgot his caution and jerked out the short, quick sentences of enthusiasm.

"Our old friend here and our marvelous climate are in league against consumption," said he. "And a man will never die as long as he can eat one of those steaks," he said, laughing at his joke and the joke of his grandfather. "Ah, here's our friend Hotze."

The politician grasped me by the hand, squeezed it, looked me in the eye and squeezed again. "It's all right," said he. "Don't you worry, for it's all right." He climbed upon a

stool, said something to the German and then addressed himself to me. "Some men have a faculty for one thing and some another. My faculty is what? Success in business? No; to tell who will be elected. With me it is a sort of instinct. Didn't I see your double team out today, Doctor?"

"Yes, my sister and the Rev. Mr. Curry."

"Well, sir, you know I thought it was Curry. He's a brilliant preacher, and he's going to make his way here."

His talk was annoying. I could have knocked him on the head. He might be able by his peculiar intuition to forecast the result of an election, and in his greasy system there might have been the essential oil of honesty, but he was a bore. Several times the Doctor turned to me to say something, but he was forestalled by Hotze. "But politics are too meager in this part of the country. New York's the only place. Old Andy Jackson said: 'I am not a politician, but if I were I would be a New York politician.'" The old hero said it, but who wanted to hear this fellow repeat it? At

last the Doctor found an opportunity and he addressed a remark to me. "If you don't mind," said he, "I would like to call for you tonight and take you out in my buggy." I told him that I should be pleased, which was the truth. And I wish I may be put to the torture if Hotze didn't offer to go with us.

"You can't lose him," Quailes remarked.

"Well, I guess not," Hotze replied. "When a fellow begins to let them lose him he's gone. I didn't know, Howardson, but it was some sort of a political conference you were going to hold out there."

"No, just a social occasion," I replied, not looking at him.

"If that's the case count me out. I haven't any time for social affairs."

I shook hands with the Doctor and returned to the hotel. I had eaten in many places not confined to my own country, but never before had I known what a beef steak could be; and this caused me to be all the more provoked at Hotze, with his self-assertiveness. And why

should he care if the Doctor's double team was out?

"Quailes, who is the Rev. Mr. Curry?" I asked, as we sat in my room looking out at the Alamo, blazing in the sun.

"Oh, he is a sort of sky-scraping preacher, newly arrived," he answered, and I fancied that I saw him smile. Was he, too, going to make himself intolerable?

"A man old enough to be learned in the book of his calling," I suggested.

"No, he is a young chap, rather fresh from college, I think."

Haney and a number of other men called and we talked about the bleeding condition of the country—the absolute need of a change. An old man came with his little grandson; the youngster had heard me speak and wanted to shake hands with me. He was a freckle-faced chap with an inquiring eye, and the first thing he did was to overturn the inkstand. The old man said, "Oh, tut," and Quailes said something that sounded like "Oh, hell." When the little rascal's hands had been washed, for he

had dabbled in the ink, he came up and said: "I want you to tell me a funny story like the one that made gramper laugh."

The old gentleman spoke up: "Mr. Howardson doesn't want to tell funny stories to little boys, Hector, but maybe he would like to hear you sing. Won't you sing for him?"

"And if I sing will you buy me some ice cream?" he cried, his eyes aflame. The old man promised and he howled a rhyme, came within one of overturning the ink again, and in a sort of triumphal march was escorted from the room by the grandfather.

"You can bet your life I'll never be a candidate," said Quailes.

"And you haven't heard that I intend to announce myself as a candidate to succeed myself," I replied, and the dry countenance of Haney cracked. "Instead of being the people's servant," said he, "our men in high positions are more often their martyrs. Yet," he added, his countenance again cracking, "the most of us are willing to stand the tortures of martyrdom."

Somehow they were all of them dull to me. I wanted no longer to hear compliments nor to receive the guesswork assurances of certain victory. The fact is, I wanted to think. There were many problems which I should study and be quick upon; a man in my position should have been ready to answer every question in which the public was interested, but he could not do it without deep meditation, and he could not meditate unless he were left alone. Quailes went out to chase the dogging shadow of duty, and finally every one was gone save Haney, who, I believed, remained to show me that he could crack his countenance again, and in the hope that the doing of the trick would set the limit of his stay, I sought by various means to assist him, drew him out, asked numerous questions, repeated what he had said about martyrdom; and once his countenance seamed for a moment, but it did not crack. I remembered that during my speech he had laughed at a thrust which I had given our common enemy, the opposite party, and I devised a similar one, but he did not smile. Was he with perverse

unconsciousness fighting against me? He launched a long harangue upon the conduct of the campaign, hinting at the distribution of our patronage, if we should win, which was certain; and finally he got up reluctantly and declared that as he had private business of a pressing nature he could not possibly stay longer. So he was gone. And now what were the problems that I desired to study? I walked up and down the room, halting at times to glance at a book or newspaper, but more often to look out upon the Alamo. But why did I within less than thirty minutes three times glance at my watch? I was impatient of the day's limp and halt, the lagging of the swollen hours.

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE DOCTOR'S HOUSE.

The doctor was prompt and I drove out with him, listening, or pretending to listen, to his mincing talk; and looking ahead through the gathering dusk I would pick out here and there a house at which he surely must stop. But suddenly he turned a corner and drew up in front of a handsome wooden house with broad veranda. The lamps had not been lighted, and out of the darkness within came floating the subdued, meditative notes of a piano, those tender touches which live in the memory of us all. As we passed through the gate the music ceased, and then in the room whence it had come there was a sudden leap of light. I shook hands with Miss Acklin, with her mother, with the doctor's wife; and we sat down, talking,

everyone at ease. And after a time Miss Zaleme and I were alone. How black was her hair, midnight spun fine; and how shapely was her neck; and how sweet was the perfume she used. And I wondered what it could be until with a thrill I knew that it was no perfume at all, but simply *her*. A man thinks he must talk books to a woman, run over titles, with a word or two of comment upon a poem or a character here and there. And how often have we seen an old fellow striving to dust the shelf of his memory, put to for some new title or author? But I soon found that she did not care to talk about books. She wanted to talk about her father, and she called him "dad," and if she should ever meet a man whom she liked better she would marry him, but that was not likely to be. Information that he was a "crank" was freely given, a "crank" on diet. He had a farm near Bowling Green, Ky., and after selling cattle and hogs for years was convinced that meat was not intended to be eaten. "But it was intended to be sold," she said, smil-

ing. "Dad argues that if people are determined to kill themselves by eating meat they ought to kill themselves with the best." He must have been a very interesting old gentleman, and I asked many questions concerning him, all of which she answered pleasingly. Was she then not a thoughtful woman but a fond child, delighted to hear herself talk of an indulgent father? No; she could rise above the pettiness of wanting to be petted. She had read. Even in her most careless talk I could see the smoothing effect of cultivation. And though she might keep upon one subject the expression of her countenance was constantly changing. It may be the most idiotic of fancies, but I have thought that when a woman realizes that she has been talking random nonsense she acknowledges it with a short sigh. Away back yonder somewhere was a woman who impressed this upon me; and she may no more have represented her sex than a totem pole represents the Christian religion. But I have always remembered that short sigh as following nonsense and

preceding seriousness. Had Miss Acklin reminded me of that woman away back yonder?

"It is so natural to think of being elected," she said. "But have you thought of being defeated?" She was sitting in a rocking chair, with her hands stretched forth upon the arms.

"Yes, late at night when thoughts are most likely to be true."

"I wonder if thoughts are most likely to be true then?" She looked straight into my eyes as if really she were wondering.

"I can't speak for others; but as for myself the best thoughts come when I awake at midnight, and the best thoughts ought to be the truest."

"And is the midnight tear the truest?" I caught her eye—or she frankly gave it to me.

"All tears are true," I answered. "We may force a laugh, but it is hard to force a tear."

"The stars seem nearer when we look through tears."

"Ah, when we look through the tears of repentance, for then heaven is closer."

If there had been mists about her they were gone now. And I saw her as we see an object in an atmosphere, pure and clear, after a rain. Some one opened an outer door and it stirred the perfume of *her*, and my nostrils were filled with it, and I breathed it as a pagan might have breathed the incense to his god.

Any one might be proud to represent such an empire as Texas," she said, and then thoughtfully she added: "The world doesn't know what this State is. It is a great civilization within itself. And its fathers were the bravest of the modern world."

"Yes, and the Alamo will always——" I looked at her and did not complete the sentence. Her expression had changed suddenly, as if a light had been turned down. "One would think that you have a strange memory of the Alamo," said I. And she started and stared at me. "I beg your pardon if I have——"

"Oh, please don't. Let it pass. You haven't heard the Rev. Mr. Curry, have you?"

"No, I have simply heard of him."

"Then in my opinion you have something to look forward to. He is almost a revelation."

I could have asked her if the Rev. Mr. Curry had heard me—that I might be a revelation to him. "A very young preacher, isn't he?"

"As a preacher, yes, but as a man he is no stripling. He has a wonderful command of language, and his figures are beautiful."

"The pulpit, as a monument to emotion, admits of figures that might not be tolerated on the platform. I don't think that pulpit oratory is the best. It addresses an audience that is already convinced; it has no jury to win. If I did not hesitate to be profane I might say that the pulpit orator addresses faith, and faith may have an eye so clear as to see things which do not exist. Higher oratory must conquer the material."

"But Mr. Curry is very liberal," she said.

"Oh, that may be and not particularly alter the general truth of what I affirm. A preacher may be liberal for a preacher; and yet among laymen he would be regarded as singularly narrow."

"You wouldn't argue against the truth of revealed——"

"Oh, no." The fact is I was simply annoyed with that man Curry. I knew that he must be a pretender, for what is easier than for a preacher to study some old sermon and pass it off as his own? Texts do not grow old, and with the church the fire of centuries ago is the fire of today. But this did not console me. What I wanted to settle in my mind was, why should this fellow Curry go about the country, passing himself off as an eloquent man? And how strange it was, too, that this woman should know so little as to be imposed upon?

"There must be a sort of kinship between you and Mr. Curry," she said, and the lack of humor in her eyes told me that she was in earnest. I managed to say "Yes" and she added: "The affinity of aspiration, if I may be permitted the expression. It is not yet formally announced, but he is to be a candidate for chaplain of the Texas house of representatives."

"The affinity of aspiration," I mused. The sting of comparison! Not that I would make

little of the position to which he aspired ; but—the fact is, I couldn't see any possible comparison. I must have given her a rebuking look, for she blushed, and old Green's verse, like a vine in bloom, was trailed before me—"Her cheeks like ripened lilies steeped in wine." I forgot the preacher. No, I did not forget him. I said that I hoped he might be elected, and I said it blithely, though I knew I lied. My physical strength was often remarked, and I must have undergone some peculiar nerve strain thus at times to feel such irritation.

I asked her to play something that had been forgotten by the world, and softly she rippled a tune that lies sweet in the memory of many a man of middle age. When the music ceased I did not ask for more. I wanted to think, and she came back to the rocking chair and sat down, with her hands stretched forth upon the arms. She was thoughtful for a time, and then she said: "How many an old song and forgotten poem shall leap back to life when the trumpet blows on the morning of sentiment's resurrection. Oh, how foolish that is,"

she cried, and then she laughed until I was impatient of her merriment. For the first time since I entered the house I heard a clock strike, and now the last stroke startled me. It was midnight. There was a brief lingering at the door. It would be difficult to recall what I said. I may have told her to tell Mr. Curry that I would do all within the scope of my influence to further his election. I took her hand, and I remember the heaviness of the realization that she was slowly drawing it away from me. I went forth from the yard and in the street I sniffed from some distant garden the scent of the early blossom, but it was not so sweet, nor was it half so thrilling as the redolence shut in by the door where I had stood—the perfume of *her*.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PRESUMPTUOUS PAPER.

By appointment I went next morning to a town fifty miles from San Antonio, and there the adherents of my cause gathered about me to assure me of their fidelity and of my election. I spoke in the courthouse, and the audience was enthusiastic; I talked in the hotel, and my listeners seemed to be profoundly impressed. "Where are you going from here?" a friend inquired of me, and I answered that arrangements had been made for my appearance the next day at a county seat sixty miles distant. But I returned to San Antonio early the next morning.

The hotel clerk handed me a letter. Glancing at it I recognized the handwriting of old

Sam Hall. Why had he addressed me at San Antonio? He knew that I had completed my work in the city and had departed. I tore open the envelope and read these words: "I know where to direct my letter, as I see that you are in love with Miss Acklin." That was as far as I read. I tore up the presumptuous paper and threw it away. What, the old fool! Now I admire the God-given faculty of intuition, and I have even a respect for close guessing, but blunt assertion angers me. But Sam, poor fellow, was hardly to be blamed. A woman had set her foot upon his heart, and the crushing was none the less complete because the foot was graceful. But what possible cause had he to say that I was in love with Miss Acklin? Why, hang him, in my letter I had merely mentioned her name.

While I was walking up and down, muttering against Sam Hall, Quail joined me, and he did not seem surprised to see me, though at parting I remarked that as there were numerous places to be visited a long time must elapse before my return.

"I've got some good news," said he. "My girl's mother has given in—your letter did it; and if you are defeated the old lady will feel that I took an advantage of her. So I want you to do everything you can for yourself. But you're all right. You don't forget your dignity. It won't do to be too familiar, you know."

Dignity? I had not thought of it, and I told him so, and with shrewdness he replied: "Well, dignity is most effective when you forget you've got it with you. But, as you know, even in this democracy, a man who would lead must——"

"Follow," I suggested, and he laughed.

"That's right. I've been secretary of more political pow-wows than any man in the State, and I know what's what. Excuse me a moment." A man came along and Quailes, stepping out, presented his card. "I beg your pardon," said the reporter, "but I wish to say something that may be of interest to you. I have seen you several times, have heard you preach, but this is the first time I have had the

pleasure of speaking to you. My card tells you what business I am in, but it does not tell you that I am the best in the State. But what I wanted to say to you is this: whenever you've got anything that the people want to know you tell me and I will serve it warm and palatable. Mr. Curry, have you met Mr. Howardson?"

It seemed that a fog suddenly cleared from the man as he stood before me, as with a bow and a smile, white and gleaming, he held forth his hand. The well-kept air of the preacher was prominent, the evidence of health, the reward of constant care; and when he spoke there was in his voice the soft tone of cultivated solicitude. He was glad to see that I was strong enough to endure the physical fatigue and the mental worry of a campaign. It had not been his good fortune to hear my speech, but he had heard of it and he was pleased to assure me that my principles were his own. He shook hands again, bowed and passed on; and Quailes, looking after him, remarked: "There's about as eloquent a guy as you ever saw."

"The rhetoric of the school I should think," said I. "Scarcely a heart-flow."

"I don't know what you mean by that exactly, but he's a talker from away back. But he's rather cool, that's a fact. He talks to the head, while you have a way of talking into a man's breast, and I guess you must feel it yourself. Let's sit down."

I felt that I was overstaying my time in the town, that justice to my own cause demanded that I should go elsewhere; but what once had been so clear a duty was obscure now, and I found weariness in contemplating it. Several men came forward and sat down, Haney and Hotze among them. Hotze had heard that my opponents were hot and strong in the harvest, working day and night. Haney remarked that in fighting so hard they might offset each other, might beat themselves, a view which so impressed Hotze that he shook hands with Haney and then with me. "I think you are wise in staying about here," said he. "Take care of the most important places and the others will take care of themselves." I soon grew tired

of the talk, and turning from it heard only a distant hum, till Haney put his hand on my arm and asked me how long I expected to remain.

"Only a short time. I am going back to Riplar within a few days, and then I shall make a systematic canvass of the State."

"When you go back give old Sam Hall my regards. Smart man, Sam; got as much of this old world's wisdom as most any man I ever met. He's had a good deal of trouble, but he has stood it like a man."

"Oh, I don't know that he has so much trouble," said I. "He has been reasonably prosperous—lucky, you might say—and man, supposed to be a reasoning creature, ought not to ask for more."

"Why, I have understood and from him, too, that his prospects in this life and all concern regarding the future were——"

"Yes," I broke in with a show of good humor which I did not feel. "You are going to say something about a woman. He is too strong a man to believe any such nonsense, and

he ought not to say that he does. The world is too old and man is too full of practical sense to be blasted in so sentimental a way. There is such a thing as sentiment, of course, and once in a while we see a weakling losing his interest in life out of disappointment of the—the heart, let us call it—but man in general is too strong for that sort of nonsense.”

“That’s where you hit the nail on the head,” Hotze declared, and somehow I felt angered with him for agreeing with me. It did not seem apparent to me that he should know anything on the subject. He was too much of an animal, too oozing of oil to hold sentiment. Not leaving off with a simple agreement with me, he proceeded to illustrate. “I could have gone around sighing over a woman—and she was a peach at that—thought she belonged to me, but *flip*, and away she went. And I said, ‘If that’s the plan of your campaign, good-day.’ And as fast as she would pop back into my head I’d put her out—the only way to do ’em, put ’em out when they pop in.”

“It’s easy enough for men who’ve not had

real experience to talk glibly," said Quailes. "And the less experience they've had the more glibly they can talk, but I want to tell you that a woman gone back on you is a hell on earth. You may talk of putting her out of your head, but you can't put her out of your heart, and that's where the trouble is. I happen to know."

I had respect for what Quailes said, for had he not told me of his disappointment when they kept him from killing himself—because of a woman? He had a right to speak, but I cared nothing for what the others said or thought. And during all this time I was attempting to devise some polite means of escape, but finding at last that it must be done bluntly, I went out. There was a dreamy, spring-time drizzle of rain, such as makes the Spanish dagger open wide its thirsty lips and drink and give to the curious and attentive a glimpse of its coming bloom, hidden in its bosom. The Alamo, distant only a few rods, was in the mist gloomily majestic, its sides steaming, one well could fancy, as if it had run hot from antiquity and leaped into the midst of the cool and calculating

present. But I laughed at a thought so foolish and so idly wanton, and I smiled to surmise what the staid voter might think if he should suspect me of such frivolity.

At the great door I stood for a moment, and suddenly my heart was tightly gripped and ceased to beat, and all before me were a dazzling of light and a flitting of shadows. But soon I was calm, and walking into the chapel I said "good morning" to her, as sweetly she smiled upon me. She said that it was a charming day, and it was, with the air so soft and the mist so full of dreams. What thoughtful solemnity she found in the old place on a rainy day, and she always came to see new tears run down its ancient wrinkles, she said. I looked about for her mother, but she was not there.

"Why, I thought you were in the country," she said, as if suddenly remembering that I had been away.

"I went to the country, but was called back here."

"And how long do you expect to remain this time?"

"Not long. Business will soon call me to Riplar."

"Oh, soon, I hope. Mother and I are going day after tomorrow."

"I may go tomorrow."

"Can't you remain a day longer and go with us?"

"I'm afraid not."

With her umbrella she was marking upon the ground. Visitors were passing in and out. I paid no attention to them, and I was pleased to think that she did not.

"Do I look like a Mexican?" she asked. And before I could answer that not in my opinion had a Mexican received such favor of the gods, she continued: "But I'd rather be called a Mexican than to be called queer. My friends often call me queer, and it makes me furious. What are you thinking about so intently?"

"Oh, nothing," I said, but I was wondering whether any one could have taken Homer's stag-eyed queen of heaven for a "greaser."

"And if you can think so deeply and forgetfully of nothing, how must you manage your mind when you think of something?"

We walked down toward the end of the chapel, I on the right, next to the door of the room in which her shrine seemed to be, and in passing the door I took care to divert her attention. Beneath a window where the misty light was falling, we halted; and I know not how the subject came about or how gently it was led to, but I know that we talked of men and women who had loved. "None but a desperate love is worth considering," she said, and even now she did not withdraw her eyes, but looked at me frankly. "I would like to think of my hero as being unable to live if he thought I didn't love him. I would want it to break his heart in an instant."

"You surely wouldn't want to kill him?"

"Of course not. But, as I said, I would want him to die if he knew that I didn't love him. But my dad says that no man can ever love me as much as I want to be loved. And no man would want to love me if he knew how jealous

I am; for I would not only be jealous of other women, but of inanimate things. I remember after hearing a great pianist I thought of how miserable I would be if I were his wife—jealous of the piano.”

“But would you give as much love as you demand?”

“Oh, yes, I am capable of it. I have pictured a life full of a sort of delirium; but they tell me that such a life could not last long. It would be a heaven, though, while it did last, and a year of bliss is worth more than a century of mere contentment. My dad says that I get such ideas from foolish books, and perhaps I do, but they seem to come up in my breast like beads rising in wine. But of course I never expect to realize such a love, for after all it is not for this life. I should think that you would have married before this, Mr. Howardson?”

“And I suppose the reason is that I looked for bliss instead of mere contentment,” I replied; and she regarded my answer as of no moment, simply as a matter of course. And in this she disappointed me. Why did she so con-

stantly fail to show appreciation? Surely a woman is a disease unto a man, with symptoms baffling to all previous diagnosis. This woman was beginning to oppress me and I wanted to be away from her ; but when I thought of going I faltered, for in her presence I was not strong. And yet I did not love her. It was a sort of nervous fever. Then was she not to me a sort of disease? I looked at her and repented of all the idle fancies which I have here set down. How full of sympathy those eyes could become, and how happy a man must be to know that they had wept for him. I wondered if that sigh was for me. Outside the wind was sweetly lisping.

"When the wind blows how sad is the music here," she said, looking at me, for she, too, was listening to the lisping air.

"But if it were not sad you would not remember it."

"That is true," she agreed. "A memory can be so sweet that is sad."

"Yes, and in our keenest joys we weep."

She smiled. "Now I feel that we are on the

stage. But I rather like it. I think that once in a while it is well to feel that we are not utterly commonplace. We might invite the charge of unnaturalness, but that is nonsense. More than half our criticisms are absurd. Why should I presume to criticise something in an atmosphere wholly different from mine?"

I did not encourage her in this view; I did not care to be stogy if I could help it, and her opinions on the subject were of no interest. To tell the truth I do not know what I wanted her to say.

We walked slowly toward the front door. I was on the point of asking her to permit me to take her home in a carriage when she remarked that the doctor was going to call for her; and very soon we saw him coming. He halted to talk to some one.

"I am glad you are going to Riplar," said I. "Out there we have oak woods. Do you like to roam in the woods—with some one who is considerate enough to let you think?"

"Yes," she said, giving me her hand, for the doctor's buggy had driven up for her.

“And,” she added, with a smile, “I will be gracious, too; I will let you think. Good-bye.” Her hand gleamed for a moment in the air, a ring flashed, and I stood gazing, not knowing which way to turn.

CHAPTER IX.

BEAUTIFUL AND DREARY.

I took train for Riplar the next morning, and how easy it was to go; how manfully had I overcome the temptation to remain one day longer. It was past midnight when I reached the town. Not wishing to alarm the tavern wherein I was wont to make my home, I went to the office and lay upon a couch, and half dozing, I saw a purple mist floating through my mind, and in the mist was a face that shone like a star. Through the window the sun had long been blazing upon me when I awoke. What was it I dreaded? To meet Sam? Yes, a Calchas delighting to augur ill.

At the postoffice there were numerous letters waiting for me; letters from earnest men

throughout the State, assuring me of their support, and that something which at times is pleased to whisper to us all assured me that I should win the fight. A newspaper printed in a distant place threw a criticism at me for obscurity. "Of course he has served in Congress, but that does not make him sufficiently well known to aspire to the Senate." I could have told this fellow that some of my speeches had been commented upon throughout the country, east and west, but he was looking for a fault and found it. But of what avail were such airy carpings? His paper was printed in a village obscured in a gulch country seven hundred miles from the State capital.

As I was thus musing in the office, old Sam came in with his sad smile. We shook hands without saying anything, and I was afraid of his first words, but I should not have been, for with conviction in his tone he remarked:

"Lucian, it begins to look as if you are going to be elected."

"Thank you, old man. That does me more

good than everything else I've heard. But upon what do you base your belief?"

"Upon the fact that you have no machine behind you—the people are sick of political machinery. Make no bad breaks and you're all right. But why do you come back here at this time?"

"Because I have discovered that much can be accomplished by correspondence, and I wanted to write here, undisturbed. A candidate at home may belong to himself, but away from home he is the property of every man."

But why did he sit there with his hands clasped about one knee, smiling at me as if a new humor were bubbling within him?

"Didn't you say that the Acklins were coming out here to visit old man Carson?" he asked, his smile gradually fading like a wan light.

"Yes, I think you can credit me with having given that information."

"But why do you quibble? Why don't you simply say yes?"

"I did say yes."

"Not without a beating of the bush. When are they coming?"

"Well, by persistent inquiry I suppose I could find out, but——"

"Yes, and I am going to find out by persistent inquiry. When are they coming?"

"Tomorrow."

"Oh, before you'll have time to write many of your letters. But if she comes perhaps you won't need to write so many."

"Sam, I must make a request of you—not to torment me. You see me in the midst of a host of campaign worries and you have taken it into that hard head of yours that I am in love. But you ought to know that when I told Viola Morgan good-bye, I bade farewell to woman in general."

"You didn't love Viola Morgan."

"Perhaps I didn't in your way, but I did in mine."

"But, Lucian, a man of your nature must sooner or later love as I did. Such a nature is the prospectus of the book to come. And I

have been dreading it for you, for, as you know, I am close-hooked to you."

"Yes, I know that, Sam, and when the book follows the prospectus I will enlighten you."

"What fights harder against itself and against fate than such a nature? And how secret it is, attempting to steal from itself and lying persistently! Ah, my friend, the awful passion does not mean a beautiful nor even a chaste woman, a truth attested by many a tragedy."

From his pocketbook he took a photograph, one which often I had seen, of a plain woman with wide-open eyes. "Lucian, the moment I first saw this face I knew that hell itself had spewed its eternal fire into my soul. There was no time to run, to dodge. Tell me about Miss Acklin. What is her Christian name, if anything about her is Christian?"

"Oh, let me think."

"It will come presently."

"I think—yes, it is Zaleme."

"A good name to dance upon the mind at midnight. And what is she like? Tall?"

"If she were willing and were to tiptoe I could kiss her without stooping."

"Good. And her eyes?"

"Stars shining through jet."

"Good again. And her hair?"

"You spoke of Viola Morgan's hair as shredded copper. Zaleme's hair is silken ravelings from the darkest chamber of the Mammoth Cave."

"A description which may mean absolutely nothing, Lucian, but which to me is minuter than a photograph. And now all I have to say is, God pity you."

I arose early the next morning for I felt that she was in the town. The blooming cherry-trees poured out their sweets upon the air. A nesting oriole flew past me with a red ribbon in its beak—a strip of flame. Music almost inaudible came from afar.

Carson lived nearly a mile from town and for exercise I strolled out in that direction. Many a time and, as now, in early spring had I taken the walk, but never before had it been so full of pleasure and promise. The roadside

was bordered by sweet grasses, with here and there a white blossom. And that ill-kept, unpainted old wooden house, always a dreary reproach to winter and a blotch upon the face of spring, how bright it looked now, as if within its walls it held a glowing joy.

Old man Carson was planting something in his garden and I halted at the fence to talk a moment and then to return to town, for in my office there were affairs that demanded prompt attention. He came forward ready to talk and began to tell me of the trouble he had experienced with his neighbor's pigs. And for ten minutes or more I talked about pigs. He asked me how my campaign was progressing, and I assured him that my election was certain. "Have just returned from San Antonio," said I, and I expected him to look toward the house, but he did not. And then I remarked: "You have relatives in that city, I believe."

Just at this moment he found a hole where a pig had got through the fence, and he began to stop it up with chunks of wood. "Now here's where one of them infernal rascals got

in. And I'm going to send word over to Jamison that if he don't keep them out he'll hear a dog bark and a hog squeal."

"I was in San Antonio several days."

"As sure as you are born—hear a dog bark and a pig squeal."

"I met some of your relatives there."

"That so? I was expecting my sister and niece this morning, but they didn't come. Well, I reckon that ought to keep them out," he added, surveying his work. "Won't you come in, sir?"

I thanked him and I told him no. It was a barn-like place with a front window blind hanging by one hinge, and in a corner of the yard a cow was distressfully lowing. I turned back toward the town, and the cheerless road was bordered by yellowish grass, set here and there with a ghastly flower. The sunshine lay pale upon the hillside, and a dusty bird flew past me. I halted at the postoffice, and among my letters was a square, cream-colored envelope, superscribed in violet ink, postmarked San Antonio. I hastened to the

office, stealing away to be alone with it; and there I sat gazing upon my name in her writing, and the room was filled with a delicate perfume. I dreaded to open the envelope, to read the cool and formal words, but I did soon and for a long time sat gazing at the brief message. "I am so sorry we could not come at the appointed time, a delay occasioned by mother's neuralgia. But we hope to come within a few days; and then I shall be pleased to have you conduct me to those marvelous woods where one can muse without interruption." That was all, but it was a whole book to me, but not that in it there was encouragement. What encouragement? What did I wish for or expect? She had shown that I was not forgotten, and that was enough. Old Sam found me gazing at the note.

"Lucian, it appears that you are receiving letters instead of writing them. What, is it a secret?" Had I, with the impulse of unconscious secrecy, attempted to hide the letter? But I handed it to him, and reading it with

his peculiar sharp cornered smile, he returned it with the remark:

"That looks all right, Lucian."

"The words don't say much, Sam."

"Oh, I don't care anything at all for the words. I mean the handwriting. It is that of a stubborn woman."

"Stubborn?" I repeated.

"Yes, true to her principles and herself. The pliant woman may be sweet, but she is never true. Enduring love itself is a sort of pig-headedness."

"I thought you compared it with blazing lava from——"

"Yes, I know. But you can compare it with almost anything. I suppose I mean that constancy is a sort of pig-headedness. Yes, that's what I meant, not love. But why should I attempt to philosophize with you. You are yet whole, while I am but the part of a man. St. Simon, speaking of a prince who had been poisoned, said that his heart when taken up flowed through the fingers like a liquid. I was poisoned, you know, and my heart would blow away like ashes."

CHAPTER X.

THE PURPLE BANK.

Poor old Sam! Nothing could be sincerer than his grief. To most men time brings the balm of forgetfulness, or at least it lifts up a sorrow and lightens it for the bearer, but with him there was not even a shifting of his gall-ing load. He had withdrawn from the general practice of the law, preferring the specialty of real estate, but had consented to look after a number of cases of mine which had lapped over into the campaign; and he did it with devotion. When I spoke of the settlement of a certain case he said: "Never mind about settling with me for anything. Every cent you can rake and scrape will be needed in this political trouble of yours." Surely there was a glow left amid the ashes of his heart.

And again the air was full of a music so still it could scarcely be heard, and the perfume from the woods was sweetened tenfold with the coming of another sun, for I knew that she was there. I waited till the afternoon, and then I walked out toward old Carson's house; and afraid to find him, an ill-omen in the garden, a scare-crow of hope, I kept my eyes averted, but at last I looked and he was not there. As I opened the gate a frisking puppy and an old dog that ran sidewise came to meet me, and an old woman whom I took to be Mrs. Carson opened a door leading out upon the front veranda. It was Mrs. Carson and she knew me, dear old soul, and invited me to a seat where a cool breeze was stirring; and she brought me a fan and said she would be much pleased if I would make myself at home. And out came Mrs. Acklin. She gave me a dim smile, but she was cordial in her manner and declared that seeing me was like meeting an old friend. And wasn't I an old friend, and a good friend at that? She knew, she said, that Zaleme had written to me, and

how pleasant it was to know that some one was looking forward to their coming. Zaleme was running wild, she was so glad to get back into the country. I heard no footsteps, no swish of skirt, no sound, and yet I knew that she was coming. She came round the corner of the house, and in her hair she wore a red bloom. At the steps I met her, and took her hand, which she gladly thrust forth, and I led her to a chair, wishing that the way were a league instead of a few steps. The old ladies imposed no restraint, for there were no confidences to be exchanged, but I wished that they would go away. They talked about ancient friends, now dead, of women whose marriages had reached an unfortunate turn, of hopeless cripples in poverty-ridden families. Old man Carson came, without a coat and with his shirt sleeves rolled far up about his brown arms. And to make me feel at ease he began to talk politics. He knew Apperson, who had, while in Congress, sent him some grass seeds: and that was a strong argument in his favor. Still, local pride must of necessity impel him to support

me. At that time I would have valued his withdrawal more than his support. The girl had come with a bounding spirit and plainly said: "I am glad to be here," but he had driven it away, and now she sat with a shadow on her face.

"Look yonder," the old man called out. "See that horse trying to nose off the top rail of the fence so he can jump over into the orchard."

"He wants to stand under the tree and let the blossoms fall on him," said Zaleme.

"Well, now, if he don't get away," replied the old man, "something will fall on him and it won't be a blossom, either. That's Mayfield's horse, ain't it, mother?"

Mrs. Carson said she thought that it must be Thompson's. Mayfield had several sorrel horses, but not one with a white nose.

"Well," said the old man, "there he goes, and it's a good thing for him, too. Thompson's got the finest farm in the country and all he needs is a wife." He chuckled at Zaleme, rub-

bing his hairy arm, grinned at her mother and was much taken with himself.

"An old bachelor?" Zaleme asked.

"No, widower."

"His wife worked herself to death," said Mrs. Carson, clearing her throat. "It's the truth if ever one was told. Thompson is a northern man, and it seems that no matter how well off a Northern farmer is he lets his wife work. I told her one day, I said, 'Great goodness alive, you'll kill yourself.' But she kept on, and sure enough she died, and as good a soul, too, as ever lived. And now he is looking for another wife."

"Well, he needn't look at a daughter of mine," said Mrs. Acklin. "I don't care how much he's worth."

"No one needs to look at your daughter, mother, you know that," Zaleme replied, and a hundred fancies began to buzz in my head. "And especially a man who has permitted his wife to work herself to death," she added. "Brother has taught me that I don't want to be a doctor's wife, and——"

"How about a lawyer?" old Carson broke in, with a wink at me.

And she was not at all embarrassed when she said: "Oh, a lawyer is out of the question. He would be wedded to his clients and would forget me. And a preacher—well, I wouldn't like to be compelled to take everything that women would give me, and smile and tell them how thankful I was."

"You've got the list pretty well cut down," said the old man. "How would you like a man whom you couldn't see too much of, a traveling drummer, for instance?"

I saw her catch her breath quickly and meet a look from her mother's eyes; and the fancies in my head buzzed louder, like bees swarming. But the old man comprehended nothing and continued to talk: "Getting back to Thompson, why, there's no better man anywhere than he is and that talk about his wife killing herself with work is all the palest sort of moonshine. Why, she had a horse and buggy—that horse, I think, standing out yonder just now—and could drive out as often as she wanted to,

but of course the women of the neighborhood had to have it that she killed herself. I'm going to ask him to come over while you're here."

"Not to see me, uncle, please. I know very well that I shouldn't care for him." And then she turned and, pointing, said to me: "I suppose those are the woods you told me about. Are you going to keep your promise? I'm ready."

And so was I, and through the front gate and across a clover field we went, to the woods, greenish with opening buds. Spring in Texas is a mad riot of wild flowers, defying the botanist, a mob of struggling color. Giant violets, a nameless blossom like a primrose dipped in blood, shooting the astonished eye with a pain; buttercups with hanging heads, half asleep, drooling honey. We came to a rivulet—and a rapturous bank blazing like a variegated fire. We had been silent, and now I spoke, not in the tone of common sense, but almost in a shout:

Let us sit upon this bank and weep our wet eyes dry
amid the scented bloom,
And then to Heaven our faces we will turn
To catch the dripping dew within our eyes:
Then back to bloom and weep them dry again.

"Oh," she laughed, "how could you remember that? Do men read such foolish things now-a-days; was that from one of the old dramatists?"

"From one of the very oldest."

"How barbarous and free they were. But how true. Man wrote best before man began to criticise. The fear of censure often kills a truth."

Was this the pettish woman who would rather be taken for a Mexican than to be called queer? Was she flesh and blood, like other women? Was she not at times a sort of seeress? The soul does not steadily abide within us, but wanders hither and thither, seeking rest; and when it returns and lights this lowly temple for a time, men say that we have been inspired.

We sat upon the bank and her tongue was free and I listened. But she gave opinions and

not the secrets I longed to know, why the Alamo was her shrine, and what she meant by the words, "No one needs to look at your daughter, mother." I dared not ask her, but sat listening, in the hope that she would drift upon the—the reef—entered my mind, and I wondered if it were not predestined a wrecking reef to me. And then, protesting that I did not care for her, I gave myself up to the lulling sweetness of her voice. She told me of her trials at school, of her singular love of philosophy and the mathematical blight of her mind. And then she began to talk of politics.

"Uncle thinks you will be elected," she said. "And won't it be pleasant for me, if I should go to Washington, to know that I have a friend there. For you have been so kind to me that you are my friend, aren't you?"

Without a waver she looked into my eyes and I told her yes. "But you have a great deal of work ahead, haven't you?" she asked, her voice deep and earnest.

"Yes, thousands of letters to be written and hundreds of places to be canvassed."

"And surely you will not permit your private business here to interfere with your plans?"

"No; my friend, Sam Hall, will take care of my business here—as soon as I can get it into a shape so that he can take hold of it."

"Quailes has told me about him—he has told me about nearly everybody. Didn't he have some great disappointment?"

"Yes, a woman killed his heart."

"Oh, what a sorrow. But won't his heart come to life again?"

"No, it is ashes."

"And if her heart prompted her to be unfaithful, couldn't she—couldn't she have been gentler?"

"Despair cannot be made easy."

"Did he almost die?"

"Yes, praying for death."

"Oh, his was a love worth having. And uncle told me something else."

"What was it?"

"Can't you guess?"

"About a woman—Viola Morgan."

"Yes. How quick you are. And did she leave your heart a heap of ashes?"

"No. My pride was wounded, but I recovered soon, and now I know that I didn't love her."

"You know it *now*, you say. Do we have to learn to know that we did not love?"

"Yes—and sometimes it comes upon us slowly."

"And do we know when we have learned to love—and is such a love strong?"

"When love is a task, a lesson, it can be learned. But there is a love which is ever a barbarian, fighting, always conquering. We may fly, but it pursues, waving its fire-brand."

"Isn't it strange that we should be sitting here talking thus?" she said. "We know that not far away there are electric cars and the newest inventions and discoveries in science—and yet we sit upon this purple bank of the middle ages and talk—of love."

"To love there is no middle age, no age but the first age. I knew a white-haired man, an electrician, an inventor, with his work spread

out beneath an electric light—and as if in the candle's semi-gloom he loved an unworthy woman—and killed himself."

"No, love has no age," she said, musingly. And then she asked: "Was Miss Morgan handsome?"

"Cupid must have surveyed her face and set her features; and yet it was a face that soon fades from the mind. She was like a bright flower that has no perfume. I thank her."

"You thank her? And what for?"

"For marrying the cattle man. He came and dazzled her with his wealth and now he is in Congress and she is doubtless happy."

"And if you are elected you will see her in Washington. Won't it be embarrassing?"

"To her, perhaps, because I shall be in the Senate and her husband in the House."

"You said you had *learned* that you did not love her. What do you mean by that?"

"Exactly what I said—that I had learned."

"When was this—this romance?"

"Several years ago."

"And when did you—you learn?"

"Very lately, I think—after I came out as a candidate."

"Oh, and then you found that ambition was stronger than love."

"No, not that. I—you don't know what you are saying. But before I tell you more of myself, and you must admit that I have been free, tell me, please, why the Alamo is your shrine—why you stared and——"

She put her hand upon my arm. "That was a tragedy, Mr. Howardson, and I must not talk about it. Shall we go now?"

We strolled back across the clover fields, she talking in lively mood, I brooding. Long had we sat upon the bank, and concerning me she knew everything, while of her I knew nothing. I did not wish to go into the house and at the gate she gave me her hand, but her eyes did not meet mine.

CHAPTER XI.

GRASPING AT AN IMAGE.

On my way back to town I was overtaken by a man who informed me that he had just returned from the capital of the State and that the most influential men connected with the government had decided to support me. This news was surely encouraging, but before I had gone a dozen rods it had passed out of my mind, leaving me to ponder over Zaleme's meaning when she questioned me concerning my stay in Riplar when surely there must be so much important work waiting for me in other parts of the State.

The tavern bell was ringing for supper, but I went to the office. Old Sam was lying on the couch on his back, with his arms under his head.

"You have seen her?"

"Yes," I replied, sitting down.

"And I can see that she puzzles you more than ever."

"She does—that's a fact."

"What do you think?"

"I don't know."

"What do you want to think?"

"I don't know that, either."

"Do you know what you look like to me. A man half wild. Mind you, my eye has been educated. To the average eye, you are simply restless."

"Sam, what do you want me to do?" In my voice there must have been a tone of sorrow, for he sat up instantly and put forth his hand as if with a touch he would in some way soothe me, but he leaned back against the wall, sat for a time in silence, and then he said:

"You knock the props from under me. I am a great hand to diagnose, but I can't prescribe. What do I want you to do? The best you can. And what is that? I'll swear I don't

know. Then why do I keep on talking to you? Don't know."

Late at night he and I walked about the echoing town. We talked politics and he said that his eye, which rarely failed to see aright, saw my victory coming. He knew that distinction awaited me. There always was hope for the student, for the man who read outside and far beyond the demands of his own vocation. Members of the bar had laughed at me for carrying a book of poems in my pocket. But they had not laughed the next day when a poem won a jury. He believed that after a time I would make myself as much at home in the Senate chamber as I had in the court room. I listened abstractedly, and suddenly I said to myself: "Is this croaking old Sam singing that sweet song?" I had never expected from him a tune of so soothing and hopeful a melody. And yet soon I gave it but half an ear, as if it were a tune grown stale. How great is the psychological change that can come upon us in a moment!

I resolved to leave home at a time no fur-

ther distant than two days—made an oath of it, and Sam applauded my determination. I was holding the mirror, not to the face of nature, but to the smiling face of success.

The next day, while pondering deeply, there came the realization that I was walking toward Carson's house. Straightway and with a firm step I went to the office and wrote a letter to a ward organizer; and then I sat and mused, and through the rear window gazed at a humming bird that whirred among the purple flowers. And later, while writing to a county judge, I found that rhymes were dripping from my pen. So I went out to walk, not in the direction of Carson's house, of course; but when I had come opposite the gate, I halted and gazed into the house. It was for a moment only, for I hastened on, afraid of being seen. I was seen a moment later, by Carson, who stepped from behind a clump of bushes in the yard and asked me to come in. I strove to make myself astonished that he should ask me, seeing that I was hastening to attend to some important matter, and I thanked him and

walked on, my feet growing heavier with each step. To the left was a wooded pasture, and a gate opening out upon the road; I heard the gate creak, and, looking, I felt my heart swell like a billow, almost choking me. But I walked on, determined not to let her know that I had seen her; and then I began to curse myself, for she was going to suffer me to pass without a word; and I did pass, but with great effort, so heavy had my feet become. I thought she called me, and I wheeled about, but no—toward the house she was walking jauntily, and surely with no thought of me. Then I said to myself: "I will go back and buy a horse from old man Carson. I have no place to keep one, and of all things I need a horse the least, but I will go back and buy one—bargain in the interest of a client, and after a time I can receive word that he has changed his mind." But was I a man to be quibbling thus with myself? I went to my office.

How tired one becomes in the spring of the year. And how blue everything looks. The

droning of a bee at the window made me sleepy, and I lay down upon the couch, and instantly I was wide awake. In came a man, a fellow with a leer of evil, a sordid eye, and said that he wanted a hundred dollars to use in his district, in my behalf. Of course it was with pleasure that the request was refused, but not with pleasure nor even with mildness did he accept the refusal. I got up to kick him out, and as I was about to do it, old Sam came in. He scowled at me and taking the scoundrel by the shoulders, put him out.

"Why," said he, sitting down, "putting him out is all right enough, but you oughtn't to kick him. In fact, Lucian, I don't know whether he ought to have been put out at all. He came as a sort of diversion and you ought to have entertained him. Didn't he change the drift of your mind?"

"Yes, decidedly."

"Well, then, he was good for you, presuming that your thoughts were, let us say, tiresome. You ought to have been like old Calvin Burgiss, of North Carolina. He was going

along the road one night, with a breach of promise suit haunting his brain, when suddenly two men stepped out into the road and thrust pistols under his nose.

“‘Gentlemen,’ he cried out, ‘I am pleased to meet you. What are you going to take?’ They took his money and at the close of the ceremony he said, ‘Good-night, gentlemen, so glad to have met you.’ And you should have felt as he did, Lucian.”

“But I have no breach of promise case on hand.”

“True enough, but it’s worse, and anything to give even temporary relief ought to be welcome. By the way, I was out at Carson’s this morning.”

“You were!” I cried in surprise.

“Yes; you didn’t ask me to go with you and——”

“Come now, Sam, you know it was simply an oversight.”

“Yes, I know that at times to forget the world is simply an oversight. But I really had business with Carson—a real estate transfer.”

"Did you see—her?"

"Oh yes, and had quite a talk with her—very practical girl, I should say."

"It's just what you shouldn't say. I don't think she's at all practical."

"That's where you are misled. Don't you know that women are more practical than men?"

"No, I don't."

"But I do. A woman——"

"What did she say?"

"About you? Oh, she spoke of you."

"I didn't ask you that."

"No, but that's what you meant."

"Sam, you used to bark; now you are beginning to bite."

"That's right, I am as mean as a dog."

"I didn't say that."

"No, but it's a fact."

"It is not a fact. You are the most generous, whole-souled fellow in the world. But tell me what she said."

"About you?"

"Well, yes, if you will have it that way."

"It's you that *will* have it that way. She spoke highly of you, said you had been kind to her."

"Sam, you spoke of her hand-writing, you remember—about her being stubborn. What do you think now that you have seen her?"

"That she is as steadfast as a rock. The man who wins her love will keep it; however, to be frank with you, Lucian, I don't know but it has already been won."

"I'm afraid of that, too, but I won't believe it—nothing shall convince me of it."

"Why should you care? You don't love her."

"Well, no, that's true."

Sam said that he knew it and then we sat in silence. How peculiar a fellow he was, and how gray his hair was turning, though he was not so very old; and his face, how full of wrinkles. Ah, trouble has many a mask, which it puts from day to day upon our faces, choosing those with deeper and yet still deeper lines. But a young god of happiness may spring up, with the coming of a new sunrise,

tear off the mask and with a wing, loaned by the angel of love, fan back to youth the aged countenance. While thus musing I knew that there were times when the mind would reject a truth to grasp an image. We speak of the nobility of love, and in a heedless passion there may be a gentle virtue, but we know that reason leads a man to enlightenment, that love, with her iron-pointed lash, often drives him back to barbarism.

CHAPTER XII.

OUT IN THE STORM.

I sat alone in the office until the hour was late. The night was dark. The damp breath of a cloud was blown in at the window. A long time had passed since the sound of a foot-step had fallen—a patrolman treading his way through the lonesome hours. How weary seems all the world when high overhead in the darkness the bell strikes one. It is as if life itself is companionless. One, nothing more, and hill-side dogs cease their barking and then in a prolonged howl pour forth their sorrow.

I put down the window to keep out the coming rain, went out, locked the door and was looking up at the clouds when I heard a quick step. There came a distant, dull flash of lightning, and I saw something gleam above

my head and I threw up my arm and caught a heavy blow upon it, caught a wrist, and knew that a knife was lashing at my arm. Firmly I held the wrist, and with free hands we fought. Grasping at his throat I tore his garments—I got my thumb in the corner of his eye—but no, nothing so barbarous as that. I was heavier, stronger, but he was quick, and how dexterously he strove with the free hand to seize the knife. As I struck him, he shook in the grasp of my other hand, and he tottered, but he dodged like a rat and muttered in Spanish, and then I knew him. I tried to catch his other wrist; I was sure that with the strength of my right hand I could break it, but he had a way of turning about and humping forward so that I could not reach him. To cry for assistance did not occur to me. I was in the fight and my only thought was to conquer. If I could only hit him in the burr of the ear, but surely he had the head of a rat. But during all this time his wrist was shrinking within my grasp; he was in agony, for I could hear him groan. "Mercy,"

he cried in English, but I gave him a twist, and in the flash of light I saw his face, almost at my knees, turned upward, and down went my fist with a smash. He was limp in my grasp—the knife had fallen to the ground. It was all I could do to restrain myself. I yearned to tear him to pieces, and I did put my foot upon his neck till I could summon the patrolman. He came with a lantern, and in the bleeding thing upon the ground we recognized a Mexican, Loro Dalio.

“It’s a pity that we can’t have the first say so with him,” said the policeman, “but we’ve got a warrant for him from a town down the road. I reckon you’re able to walk now. Come, get up here with you now.”

Sam Hall had warned me against the Mexican, but since my return I had not thought of him.

The policeman picked up the knife and I saw something gleam in the light and took it up—a small morocco jewel case, and on it glowed in gold the name “Zaleme.”

“Let me take this,” said I. “It belongs to a

friend of mine," and I put it into the pocket of my coat, but it burned against my breast, and I took it out and wrapped my handkerchief about it and, carrying it in my hand, went to the hotel. At so late an hour there was usually no one stirring about the place, but now a number of boarders were in the office, having come from their rooms in fear of the coming storm. And by this time the wind was howling and from overhead came a tearing noise as if the roof were ripping off. I went to my room and put the jewel case upon the cold slab of the dresser and sat down to think. In the street arose the cry that a cyclone was coming and I hastened below. The storm had increased in violence and a fierce rain was lashing the earth. Harder and harder the wind blew, and in my breast was a sickening fear—that old Carson's house might blow away. Pale women with hanging hair came running down the stairs, and in a corner knelt an old negro, praying piteously. The front door blew open with a crash of glass, the rain threshed in and I—I was out in the street with my face set toward

Carson's house. As far as the edge of the town there was here and there a light, but I had to grope with my head bent, for the rain was blinding and it beat hard upon my breast. Out upon the road the wind was fiercer, but there was less danger, and with no chance to go astray unless the fences marking the boundary of the roadway should be blown down. Horses neighed and cattle lowed distressfully. In the woods there was a great roar and it seemed to be coming nearer and nearer, and yet it remained off in the woods. Surely old Carson's house could not stand so fierce a blast. Thunder jarred the earth and the lightning shot across the sky from the east and tore open the black bosom of the distant west. For a moment there was the house, a live coal in a torrent of liquid fire, and then came a blackness that almost benumbed the heart. Feeling along the fence I found the gate, went into the yard and halted beneath a locust tree, but the falling boughs threshed me and I stood out in the open, waiting for the light and—what? For the in-

ward glory of saving her life, to seize her in my arms, to hold her to my breast, to let my wild heart beat against hers. But the deceitful old house stood there, and no one seemed to be disturbed. The roar in the woods was dying, the rain did not beat so hard, the storm was passing, and with a disappointment which I could not have explained and which my reason must have condemned, I stole out at the gate, afraid now of being seen. The rain ceased, and now out upon the road I trod prosaic mud, ashamed of myself. I stole into my room—a drenched and dripping fighter of wind-mills, tossed high in the blanket of sheer absurdity.

The jewel case! I unwound my handkerchief from about it, opened it; and I found a lock of light hair, clasped with gold, and a locket, and in the locket were two pictures, of a light-haired man and of the—Alamo.

CHAPTER XIII.

GAVE HER THE LOCKET.

Old Sam joined me at the breakfast table on the following morning, and as he took his seat he remarked: "So, you proved yourself a hero last night." I heard a rush in my head, I felt that I was red, and I stammered something. "In your conquest over the Mexican," said he, and in relief I cried: "Oh, yes." I thought he alluded to my struggle through the wind and the rain, to my standing in Carson's yard, watching for the house to blow down. The fight for life had faded from my mind.

"What did you suppose I meant?" Sam asked, giving me his peculiar smile, in which there was a cool harmonizing of bitterness and generosity.

"What else could you have meant?"

"And is your life so lightly to be estimated that you forgot the fact that only a few hours ago you came near losing it?"

"I wasn't in any especial danger."

"No? Regard it as a sort of cheerful greeting when a ruffian rushes upon you with a knife, and in the dark, too, eh? But I am worrying you, Lucian, and I won't. You know I warned you against that fellow, but of course you had no way to protect yourself against him. He must have committed numerous petty robberies, for in his pockets they found odds and ends of household vanities, rings and breastpins."

Did he know what I had found? Was nothing beyond the reach of that searching eye? At times how devilish was his intuition. To save annoyance, I told him of the jewel case. He was not at all surprised; he smiled. The patrolman had told him that I took up something with gold lettering upon it and had said that it belonged to a friend of mine. That had given him a clue, so strong, indeed, that he had requested the officer to speak of it to no

person. And for this I thanked him, assuring him that he was always considerate in the absence of a friend. He smiled and remarked: "Ah, but in his presence—how——"

"That is another matter. Sam, I have known you for years, and during all the time you have been a deep study to me."

"You must believe in the study of man."

"Yes, for other philosophies may be dead. Man is a living philosophy."

"You mean a living fool, don't you?"

"A living issue, at any rate."

"Lucian, I don't think your study of man has been in relation to philosophy, but to politics. You are a born politician, and I have studied *you* for years. Understand, you are as good a fellow as ever lived, true to your friends, and I might say fatally generous, but no man can feel as much interest in an acquaintance as you always seem to. But of late you have been almost completely changed. And at your time of life a man must be powerfully wrought upon——"

"I'm not so old, Sam."

"Oh, sensitive along that line, eh? Why, some time ago you snorted when some old fellow said he didn't believe you mature enough for the Senate."

"Look here, Sam, you want me to do something. What is it?"

"Acknowledge to me," he said. "You know what."

"But suppose that in such an acknowledgment there——"

He stopped me with a shake of his wise old head. "No bush-beating. I want to know. Will you acknowledge?"

"And if I should, it would be an acknowledgment to you before—to myself. I have denied it, even under the spell of her presence, of a sweet incense that arose from her—but, yes, I will acknowledge it, Sam."

He reached over and took my hand, and his throat appeared to be swollen. There was no one else in the room, save the negro waiter, and he stood in a corner, asleep, like a horse. And for a long time we sat in silence. A sour sharpness was gone from his smile. We parted

at the door. The sun was hot and there were but few reminders of the storm, tangled shrubbery and a pool of red water in the road; and about them were gorgeous butterflies, winged fancies.

Old man Carson was gathering up the locust boughs which the wind had snapped from the trees and scattered upon the ground. I was quite upon him before he was aware of me, and peering through his green burden he called out: "Just go in and make yourself at home and I'll be there in a moment." On the veranda there were rocking chairs and I sat down to wait for the old man to throw the boughs over the fence, which he did, and then he came slowly walking toward the house, a turkey gobbler strutting behind him. He sat down, took off his hat, dropped it upon the floor beside his chair and said that it was warm, and I agreed that it was warm. He could not say that the rain was done with, and neither could I. Away off to the northwest the storm must have done considerable damage, and I thought so, too. Zaleme and her mother drove

early into town to do some shopping and he didn't know when they would be back; and after this it made no difference to me whether or not he knew anything. But unfortunately he did, and about politics. There are two subjects which all men in America are prepared to discuss, politics and a prize fight, and for both of them ignorance often serves as a textbook. I saw a buggy and looked at him. Confound him, why didn't he say whether or not it was Zaleme. He sat there talking about his young onions; and the ground was drying so fast that he could weed them pretty soon, and—the buggy drew up at the gate. Ah, and had she slept in the moon and for a morning bath had she plunged into the sun? They say that the ignorant are those who have not by education been taught to govern their emotions; and I have no doubt that Milton's hell would be hotter if his brain had not been cooled by the sublime thought of all preceding ages. Yes, that is what they say of the ignorant, and if it is true that to feel with undue intensity is a mark of igno-

rance, then I am far from learned. But how wise she must have been, for she seemed to feel nothing; perhaps, however, I thought with a pang, there was nothing to feel. She sat in a rocking chair, fanning herself, and an anger arose within me, not against her, but inflamed against the picture of the man in the jewel case. She must value it, and if so, deserved punishment, and I would punish her. I asked her if she had been frightened by the storm. She was accustomed to storms; the wind often blew hard in Kentucky.

"Our bank of flowers, where your ancient poet waited to sit and weep his wet eyes dry, must have been moist enough last night," she said.

To know that she had remembered what I had said was a sort of consolation, and I postponed her punishment, but it was respite instead of pardon; she deserved to suffer.

"Oh, you have met my friend, Sam Hall."

"Yes; and isn't he interesting—but he's awfully harsh at times. It is a harshness, though, that one must pity, considering the—the his-

tory of his heart. And that reminds me—how much more interesting the history of a man's heart than the history of his public acts. Wouldn't you like to know the battles fought by the heart of a great man—not the pretended ones, such as we read about, but the real ones—wouldn't you like to know?"

"Yes, but the heart of a great man is generally bound up in his public life. His heart has afflictions, but is not often called upon to fight a great battle because——"

"Because what?"

"Because woman yields to greatness."

"Oh, no, no, you mustn't think that. Do you mean that woman is ever willing to be the slave of greatness; is that what you mean?"

"No, that is not what I mean exactly, but there is in it an element of my meaning. But this and similar questions have been argued time out of mind. Let us talk about my friend."

"We were talking about him. Do you know that I am well enough acquainted with you to tell you something?"

"May I ask what it is?"

"That I don't like you very well today, for you are harsher than Mr. Hall. But I ought not to censure you, for you, like him, have had a——"

"Please don't say that when you know better."

"Indeed, I don't know better. Why should I know better when every one else in the neighborhood knows to the contrary?"

"Because I have assured you."

"But why assure *me*? I didn't demand——"

"I know that. You had no interest in it."

"Oh, yes I had—the interest of a friend."

"Then as a friend, accept the truth when I offer it, that Viola Morgan left no impression upon my life."

"If you say so, of course I must believe it; and indeed I am glad to hear you say so, for to have one's entire life——"

I held up my hand, and my heart beat hard against the jewel case, the portrait of a man; I held up my hand and she sat in silence, look-

ing at me. Was it time for her punishment? No, I would grant her another respite.

"Were you going to say something?" she asked, and her expression was so serious, so sorrowful for a moment that I had it in my softened heart to pardon her and to give her the jewel case, without a word; but she smiled, the smile of carelessness, and my heart hardened again, and I was a savage.

"Was I going to say something? It couldn't have been of any importance, for I have forgotten it."

"You spoke, I don't recall when, of going away—to attend to your campaign work. Do you expect to go soon?"

"Yes, tomorrow."

"Really, now, isn't it singular that you should go just a day before we do? Mother and I start for Kentucky day after tomorrow."

"And I suppose you are anxious to get home?"

"Yes, but I have enjoyed my stay in Texas. I come here every year—to San Antonio."

"Has your brother lived there very long?"

"No, he moved there from another Texas town about two years ago."

"Then you began your yearly visits——"

"Before he moved there? Yes."

Why was she glad to anticipate me? Was this on her part a studied or an accidental punishment? But she did not look like a wilful torturer, as she sat in half listless grace before me. Why did she, or why should she have begun her visits when there was no cause—there was a cause, and my heart beat hard against the image of it.

"Do you always come at the same time of the year?"

"Not exactly, but when it's cold at home."

"I hope that your next visit may be during the session of the next legislature."

"Oh, yes, for then I may have an opportunity to congratulate you."

"I trust that the result——"

"Oh, yes," she broke in, her face so glowing that my own hope brightened. "You will surely be elected, for everybody says so, and—and everybody is a majority, of course."

"Yes, as a rule, but not always as a legislature."

"Now you are laughing at me, but I'd rather you'd laugh than be harsh. I should think that it would be such fun to go about and meet people who are anxious to meet you and to make speeches. Isn't it?"

"Looking back, it seems that it was," I replied; "but looking forward it does not seem that it will be."

"Oh, then you have grown tired of it? Of course too much of it would grow wearisome."

Did her mind shed everything, like a swan's back shedding water; or was she artfully putting me away when she found that I was coming too near? But out of a deep study of her I came with no knowledge; no key could open her heart. Ah, and was it bolted with the steel of a time lock, and must I wait for a certain minute to be ticked off in the hazy future? A newspaper had recently offered this criticism of a speech of mine: "His address for the practical mind was too full of images." And now I wondered if that were true. Had the

woman sitting before me, slowly rocking, with her hands expressive in repose upon the arms of the chair—had she taught me, forced me to think in images?

Carson, who at the garden gate had been talking to some one, came upon the veranda to congratulate me upon my escape from assassination. "Fought a Mexican in the dark, smashed his face and took a knife away from him," said the old man, speaking to Zaleme. She looked at me and for a moment there were taut lines about her mouth. "While we were in town mother and I heard some men talking about a desperate fight, but heard no names, and surely did not think that you had been in such danger, Mr. Howardson. Tell me—no, don't tell me, either. I don't want to hear it."

"But I do," said the old man. "Rushed right on you in the dark. Now you know that's dangerous! Why, a man might be killed. You recollect old Tom Martson, found dead one morning, you know, with a knife sticking in him. Humph! And all because you'd sent the greaser to the penitentiary while you were

prosecuting attorney. They ought to hang him—that's the only way to serve such scoundrels. And they tell me he had his pockets full of all sorts of trinkets. Sneak thief as well as murderer. Well, I'm glad he didn't get you, anyway."

He went about his work, picking up things in the yard, pulling up weeds in the garden, calling out at some one passing along the road, humming a tune; an old man whose farm was in the center of the world.

"You heard your uncle say that the Mexican was a sneak thief. Have you missed any—any jewelry?"

"No, I didn't bring any with me; the truth is, I don't care for it."

"Isn't this yours?" I held forth the jewel case and I thought she would snatch it from me.

"Where—where did you get it?" Her hands were not listless now.

"The Mexican dropped it while he was trying to kill me."

"It was on the dresser and I saw it at noon-

time yesterday; and I wonder that I did not miss it this morning."

"Is it so very—very valuable?"

"To any one else? No," and slowly she shook her head, looking upon the case lying in her lap.

"Miss Zaleme, I must confess a crime. I opened it."

"Did you?" and now she opened it. "That was no crime."

"I can understand the lock of hair and the man, but why the picture of the Alamo?"

"Please don't ask me."

"Is the memory painful?"

"The memory of a tragedy is always painful."

"Am I ever to know?"

She shook her head, looked down, and was silent. And with a perversity I could not define, I was disappointed because she had not condemned me for opening the jewel case. I was soon to depart for the field of labor, and doubtless I should see her no more; and looking back into the mist, the lamp light, the

woods, her words and her actions had given me no encouragement. Encouragement toward what end? She had spoken of a tragedy. She lived in the past, worshiping at an altar, and upon it had been sprinkled sacred blood. But I was determined to see her once again, and I asked her if I might come in the evening, and with a smile that set bells ringing somewhere, she said yes, and held forth her hand.

CHAPTER XIV. •

WITH THE LIGHT OF THE STARS IN HER EYES.

Once I saw a hawk trying to fly with a piece of wood which had been tied to its foot, and it rose almost as high as the top of a tall tree, but the persistent weight pulled the bird down to the earth. And that is sometimes the condition of a man's mind. It is held down by a weight; and I felt it to be the state of my mind as I walked back to town. I was striving to construct an address, to be delivered to the people of an adjoining county. I could not soar. With a dead weight pulling at me, it was all I could do to plod.

Old Sam was in the office, and his nurse-like tenderness fretted me. He wanted something to pet, a stone bruise to tie up and care for, and only the most dependent of men could like that

sort of attention. "Sam," said I, "will you do me a favor?"

"Yes, surely, what is it?"

"Curse me. Call me a damned fool."

"Why so? What have you done?"

"Nothing, only I'd rather you'd curse me than to be so tender with me."

He laughed, not his old laugh that I used to call three-cornered, like a saw file, but a laugh that was soft and sympathetic. "I know exactly how you feel, Lucian, and I'll let your suggestion shape my conduct," and then with his eyes a-twinkle with genial mischief he swore a "mouth filling oath," but in it there was no profanity.

Our weekly paper, in order that it might give an account of the "Dastardly Attempt," and so forth, had delayed going to press, but it was out now, and I was the hero in a column of type, with a picture that might have been taken for the blackened impression of a horse's hoof. The details had been known to the town long before the paper was printed, and the 'Squire and the Judge and Uncle This and Uncle That

had congratulated me upon my escape, but after the paper appeared they came 'round to congratulate me again. One old friend said that it would do me a "power" of good among the people. He was one of those men who always can tell the reason why, by illustration, and he told: At one time, away back in the forties, he was a candidate for constable, with the chances against him; but on the day before the contest at the polls he was called upon to defend himself against a fellow who sought his life—and was elected. Sam, in his droll way, said: "Why, the fellow you fought must have been the opposing candidate and you must have killed him. Of course you were elected." This didn't displease the old man. It was an honor to have come victorious out of a fight, and if a man had been killed, it was his own fault, an error of judgment.

Mr. Carson came in and said that he wished to see me for a moment and I went over to the window with him, my heart beating fast, but it was soon eased back to the measured stroke of peace. He said that Zaleme would drive

into town about sunset and that she would be pleased to have me accompany her home. I squeezed the old fellow's gnarly hand and—caught Sam Hall's eye, the eye of soft solicitude.

The time was long, but she came at last, driving upon the public square, and I got into the buggy, and we followed a road that led toward the pink in the western sky. Along the road were hedges of Cherokee rose, and out of them came a sweet coolness. And now there was but the faintest blush in the pearl cheek of the horizon. Why has man's mind progressed so far, and why has that something, that sense which he calls his soul, remained in primitive meshes? Why can't the soul break loose and hurl itself into that light almost red up yonder?

"And probably it would be caught in a trap if it did," she remarked; and I was startled, for I had been thinking aloud.

"It might as well be caught in a trap there as here."

"But it isn't caught in a trap here," she said.

"It is held here for a time, it is true, but it goes home. Am I old fashioned to talk that way? Does it seem odd to you?"

I said no, and she replied: "But you seem surprised."

"It may be that faith is beautiful and that we are often surprised at beauty," I replied.

"Oh, thank you. But I think that there is more religion now than ever before. Though why should we talk about such things?"

"An unconscious effort to discover each other's tastes," said I. "We see it in the case of a boy and a girl 'keeping company' for the first time. They are embarrassed and they sputter, but unconsciously they discover."

"Yes, that may be very true, but why so in this instance, when we may not see each other again?"

"You said you were coming back during the meeting of the legislature to congratulate me."

"Oh, yes, so I did; but I had forgotten it," and after a pause she added: "Mr. Howardson, I often find myself surprised to realize that I may number you among my friends. You

are so widely known, and are going to be so prominent and I am so obscure. But after all what surprises me most is that I cease to be surprised. I suppose that woman accepts as her natural right any attention that a man pays to her. But what serious nonsense I'm talking. And isn't it true that solemn nonsense is the worst of all? When I begin to take myself seriously it most always ends with a headache. So after all, it is the physical seeking to predominate. What a delight I would be this evening to my old preceptress—with my big words. Isn't the air delicious?"

She was driving, and when she turned into a lane, to the right, I came within one of crying out: "Oh, we are not there yet!" meaning the place of the sunset. She continued to talk, gayer than I had ever known her, and that, too, with our parting moment so near. How I wished that the storm of the night before had held back, to burst upon us now. What a joy to have wrapped the buggy robe about her and to feel that she and I were alone in the wind and the rain. She must

have gone over the course before, for with another turn we were driving toward Carson's house; and I wondered if we were to sit upon the veranda, with the old man constantly intruding; but if we had nothing to say, what difference should it make? She felt that it was an honor to number me among her friends, and yet she stood off so cool a friend as to give no heed of her confidence. But if she really lived and worshiped in the past, why should I care for her confidence?

We sat alone upon the veranda, and she was just as gay as she had been out on the road, a trailing vine bursting into constant bloom; and if I thought of anything serious I did not utter it. At last the time to say good-bye was come. An old clock had struck a late hour, had echoed it throughout the house for emphasis, and all lights, save one in the parlor, were out, and that one, seen through the window, looked dim, tired and sleepy.

"Why have you been so lively to-night?" I asked, and in my voice there must have been a tone of reproach.

"Have I been lively? Really I didn't know it. I thought I had been particularly stupid."

"I wish you'd tell your mother good-bye for me. I didn't forget it, but neglected it."

"Yes, I will. Oh, did you see that star, how far it shot!"

"Who knows but it was a thought shooting from the mind of some genius in the heavens?"

"Shooting at some man's spirit with an idea and missing him," she laughed. "But I hope that when the gods shoot in your behalf at the legislature they'll not miss—a bad figure but a good intention, Mr. Howardson. I hardly know what I'm saying—oh, must you go now?" She went with me to the steps and we halted there, and the starlight was in her eyes, as she looked at me. I took her hand and held it for a moment, releasing it of my own will, for she made no effort to withdraw it. Dumbness fell upon me; I could not speak a word, and I stood in silence—a silence without embarrassment, a sublime stillness that seemed to have come down out of the quiet air. And so I left her with the light of the stars in her eyes.

CHAPTER XV.

A CRY FOR COMPANY.

In the strenuous work of the campaign I found a sort of rest, almost a relief. There were physical weariness, and sound sleep, and in sleep fleeting pictures, but no slow-moving dreams to inspire and awake a dread to go to sleep again. And the campaign liar arose with his enlivening diversity. In a country newspaper old Vox Populi declared that during a dinner I had drunk wine unto drunkenness. and the prohibitionists cried "shame." But the edition of the same newspaper set forth a charge more serious, appealing, as it did, to a larger class, that away back in the kind and screening past I had published a volume of verses. It was not enough to assure my accuser that the verses had been printed only

for private circulation; he replied that the private circulation happened to be a condition rather than a foresight. And still another, as truth-hating a wretch as ever walked in leather, spoke of the "Rehearsed Attempt at Assassination." But for the most part even my enemies were kind, or silent, at least; and in the intoxicating exercise of physical vigor, long walks of mornings and of evenings, I found myself throwing off the effect of a blood poisoning, a heart poison. During a tour that lasted three weeks, Old Sam was with me as manager. The fact is that his notion of politics was vague and clouded, but he was proud to be a manager and as there was nothing to manage, I let him manage. And sometimes I heard him prowling about at all hours of the night, managing; and if I showed remonstrating signs he would say: "Now, that's all very well, but there are certain things that we've got to get in hand. You don't need to worry—you sleep. All you've got to do is to meet the people. I'll do the rest." Once I hinted that business at home

might be in need of his attention. He had lost none of his sickroom tenderness, and touching my arm softly he said: "My dear fellow, the most important business on hand at present is the business of sending you to the Senate. Just have a little patience—I am doing the very best I can."

Hotze met us one night, and his oily familiarity did not assuage the dreariness of the village tavern. Sam took an instantaneous photograph of him and did not like the picture. Hotze began at once to make suggestions, and it must be remembered that Sam was manager.

"Sir," said Sam, "I doubt whether you have ever studied the science of politics."

Hotze was sitting on my bed. It makes no difference how many chairs there may be in a candidate's room at a hotel, some one must sit on his bed.

"I say the science of politics," Sam repeated.

"I guess you are right there," Hotze replied, "for all the time you're studying the science you're missing politics. I know what elec-

tions are, I can tell you that. And I read newspapers as much as anybody, and that's where you get what the people are thinking about."

"But we don't elect senators as we do aldermen," said Sam.

"Think not? Well, there is a difference, but it's work among the boys at last and the boys control the legislature."

Sam sneered. Hotze held forth a black cigar. Sam shook his head: "Thank you, I don't smoke."

"Wife object?" Hotze asked, handing the cigar to me.

"No, heart objects."

"That so? Didn't think it made any difference with the heart—and let me see, seems as if I heard some one say you claimed your heart was dead anyhow."

Sam's eyes seemed to fly into mine. "Sam," said I, speaking quickly, "you know Haney, over at San Antonio; and at a time when you were dejected, you must have talked freely to him. Mr. Haney and Mr. Hotze meet often,

met once especially when Haney requested me to give his regards to you—and it was then that I with the kindest——”

“I understand, Lucian,” he said, relieving me of an explanation that was entangling me.

“Yes, you bet I know Haney all right,” Hotze spoke up; “and he said something about some woman trouble—and I told him of a woman affair I had, and you bet she tattooed a picture on my breast that represented St. George and the Dragon and——”

Sam fell back with a loud laugh and Hotze stared at him, not wounded but surely astonished. “Oh, it’s a fact,” said he. “Nobody might have been able to see the picture, but I’ll swear I could feel it there. Fact.”

In all sincerity Sam begged pardon for his rudeness, and Hotze said, “Oh, everything’s all right. But getting back to the original proposition,” he continued, “let me say, and I hope without offense, that my experience tells me you’re in the kindergarten. Wait a minute. I can see that this is about the first

time you ever had anything to do with a campaign."

"Sir!" Sam cried with bristles rising, "I don't want any insinuations and what's more, I won't have any. Put that in your pipe along with your wealth of political wisdom and smoke it."

Hotze withdrew soon afterward and Sam, after walking up and down the room for a time, halted in front of me and said: "If you want me to throw up the management of this campaign just speak the word and I'll return home to-night. If you think that porpoise can manage it better than I can, all right. One word's enough."

"Why, old man," I replied, "Barnum could never have managed a show better than you manage——"

He grasped my hand. "Lucian, I thank you for those generous words, proceeding largely from a kindness of spirit, let us acknowledge, but most grateful, I assure you. I am glad you have faith in me, that you can find support in me, for we are face to face

with a difficult issue. But have faith. The fight is almost won."

How he had changed since I had made my "confession!" Before then he was cool, with a Hobbes-like dryness, with his sharp, three-cornered smile. And now he seemed like a child, wanting to be petted. On the day after meeting Hotze we were in a buggy driving across the country.

"I suppose you have written to her," said Sam.

"No. To tell you the truth she's not in my mind as—harassingly as she was. I find that I'm almost as strong as I was after Viola Morgan married the cattleman."

He was driving and the lines became suddenly loose in his hand, but he gathered them up and said: "Lucian, I hope you don't mean that."

"Why? Do you want to see me suffer?"

"No; but I want to see that you have a steadfast heart."

"So that you may think more of me or of your own judgment—which?"

"Now you are shilly-shallying. I know that you were in a great trouble, a trouble that shakes a man as a storm does a tree—and if you are forgetting it, why, I'm sorry, Lucian."

"But, Sam, she loves a memory—a shadow."

"You don't know that—you did not ask her."

"I didn't need to—I saw."

"But all this doesn't alter the fact that you were in a deep trouble and that now you are in a shallow indifference."

"Let me ask you again: do you want me to suffer?"

"And let me tell you again that I want to feel that you are steadfast."

"Sam, a man may have a disease that threatens to blight him and a certain reserve force in his constitution may at last throw off the disease. Would you accuse that man of not being steadfast?"

"Oh, if you want to be ridiculous, all right. By the way, I shall be forced to go home tomorrow. I have received a letter that demands my return. But understand that I am always

ready with my advice if not with my active services."

He went home a jaded man, as if all the weariness of the campaign had suddenly come upon him. His heart was not wholly dead. There was in it life enough to cry for company.

CHAPTER XVI.

FOUND NO SOOTHING MEMORIES.

Not long after his return home Old Sam wrote to me. "How goes the work of 'Wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles,' " said he. "Of course you must surely find some little pleasure in the excitement of the struggle, and sometimes I'm afraid that such may be your only recompense. I don't want to discourage you, but it does not seem to me that your chances are quite so good as they were. And how things are exaggerated! I met a man the other day who said you had written a book of obscene songs. This from that pretty little volume of verses intended for friends. Another fellow said that 'flown with insolence and wine' you had entered a saloon, knocked down the bartender and smashed the

mirrors. And this from the fact that you had tasted a farmer's home-made wine and pronounced it good, which I am ready to swear it was not."

Hovering over the ashes of his heart, the old man was again a cynic. Of me he could hear naught but evil, and for me he could see nothing but defeat. And all because I had been strong enough to climb out of the black hole of despair. But why did I, while thus musing, halt, startled, at the corner of a village street? A perfume had come floating upon the air, not of any flower I had known, but a scent that had thrilled me when I was with her. And with my senses swimming, gasping, I stood as if dazed, and my heart arose and with suffocating strokes beat in my throat. Ah, it had not been cured by strength of will; it had been stunned by a blow and now consciousness was returning.

I stood in a courthouse, in the presence of "fellow countrymen"; and striving to reason, felt that I was justifying a criticism—talking in images, a child playing with

picture blocks. After two other engagements to speak I was to go back to Riplar; and the prospect of rest was soothing. But when the time was at hand I shuddered to think of returning to the place where last I had seen her. And so thus I wrote to Old Sam: "I have reached what I have looked forward to as a breathing spell, but the air is not so clear as I had expected to find it, nor does the breathing bring me rest. You have been outspoken with me, to the very verge of harshness, and I will speak out to you. It has all come back to me, a perfume in the air, and I am more than wretched. So I need a rest more soothing than the mere giving up of work. I have year after year dreamed of my old home in Tennessee and in my memory it lies there now just as it was when I was taken from it many years ago. Quietly I am going to steal back there and wander up and down the old Cumberland river."

I set forth the next day, and how short was the span that marked the distance between my new and my old home. Hardly could I

realize that I walked about the limestone streets of Nashville, which years ago looked as ancient as the military roads of Rome. A half tearful memory pointed out familiar objects, old brass door knockers, bronze lions; and here was a block of stone on which I had seen a slave stand to be sold. I walked up the river toward my old home, not far from the Hermitage of Andrew Jackson, and looked back at the town, my eye full of the spirit of long ago. I loitered along the banks of the beautiful river, but from the valley where the grass was fresh there floated a reminding perfume and I hastened onward, coming suddenly upon the old house, now almost in ruins, deserted and with cattle lowing about it. And where were the soothing memories which I had expected to find, lying like cool and refreshing shadows upon this sacred land? Weary and downhearted I returned to the city. I went to an opera, sat beside an old fellow who doubtless had come down the river on a raft; and turning to me he said: "Will you be so kind and obligin' as to give me your opinion

as to how long you reckon it will be before they begin to hit the tune."

"They are in the midst of it now."

"Oh, do you think so? Well, if they don't git better pretty soon I'll have to leave."

He annoyed me and with impatience I turned about in my seat. But what was he saying?

"Don't think I can stay till she is out nohow. Got to take a train at ten o'clock for Bowling Green, Kentucky; and they tell me it's a good long ways from here, eighty odd miles."

I don't know whether or not he was on that train, but I *was*, a restless and eager passenger. And now I realized what undoubtedly I knew before, that I had not left Texas to find rest amid the scenes of long ago, that the cause lay in ambush in my heart, that by devious paths I was going to her.

The train stopped on a siding to let another train pass, and I caught the talk of two men who occupied a seat in front of me. "Not only that, a man will lie to himself and insist in honestly believing it," said one of the men, as if he had taken up the thread of my musing.

"Yes," replied the other, "and pretends to be surprised when he finds that he's lying."

"All the education in the world wouldn't place him much beyond himself; he's hardly ever broad enough not to talk about his children."

"Or his disease—the number of nights it has been since he's slept."

"Or to believe that no matter how much a woman may have loved he can inspire——"

A train rushed by and I lost the end of his sentence, but the part which I had caught ran through my mind, the words repeating time and time again. And I wondered if what he said was really to be numbered among the many vanities of man, all the time meaning myself, of course; and then it came upon me that he had echoed a truth known throughout the ages. But did I believe that I could inspire within her breast a greater love than she had ever felt before; and if I thought that she did not feel such a love would I care to—marry her? Oh, how tired I was of asking a ques-

tion of myself and looking to myself for the answer.

The train arrived at Bowling Green long before daylight and, contemptible in the eye of the cabmen, I walked to the tavern; and, domiciled therein, I lay down to think and to dream of men shouting proverbs through the smoke, and finally of a perfume which stole into the room and awoke me. My window looked out on a small park, thick-set with trees, and among the branches were numerous birds, almost lyric-mad. I knew something of the town, that the hills about it had been strongly fortified by the Confederates during the Civil War, that it was on a tongue shooting out from the blue grass region—famous for fine horses, whiskey, handsome women and game men.

When I went down to breakfast the landlord could have devised no means of surprising me more than he did, when he handed to me a letter from Sam Hall. "I know where you are or where you will be," said the old fellow, "and I send this in care of the principal

hotel of the place, presuming of course that it will reach you. Don't worry about things here, for everything is going well and if you are not elected, the whole State will rise up and demand to know the reason why. But you are going to be elected. My judgment, and I believe that you have cause to put faith in it, persists in telling me so. Ah, my dear friend, I couldn't believe that your heart had been so shallow. Take any other view of man which may suit your fancy, this truth still stands like a bronze statue—that he is never complete until the grand passion comes upon him, perhaps like a thief in the night, and that when it has come he is never the same afterward. Understand, I don't believe that it comes to all men; but when it does come and is thrown off, as I thought yours had been thrown off, it argues a vacillating heart and a soul but dimly lighted. This has established itself as a sort of philosophy with me, and knowing it, you do not wonder that I changed so suddenly toward you not long ago. God

knows I pray for your heart a different fate than the one which overtook mine; and I advise you not to give up but to continue to fight. Don't accept no; don't permit yourself to become weak; don't falter over the possibility that she has loved desperately in the past. I know that man has but one grand passion; I believe that a woman may have two. To most men this may appear as a fallacy, but it seems to have been revealed to me as in a dream that came true."

Was it impossible for me to get beyond the range of Old Sam's preaching? I confess that now and then he whimsically hit upon a truth. But I resented the fact that he had appointed himself the censor of the heart of man. Woman may have two grand passions! That was all very well, but I did not care to inspire a second grand passion. I wanted to learn, to know, that a former passion was to be classed among the lesser ones. I was determined to demand, to seize this knowledge; I was stronger now than when I last had seen her.

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“Ah, landlord, what road shall I take to Mr. Acklin’s?”

“The Drake’s Creek pike. Any one can show you.”

CHAPTER XVII.

LISTENING FOR THE SOUND OF A HOOF.

The farm lay along the creek, about three miles from town, and I preferred to walk. The way was easy and the prospect a delight, the brown turnpike, the green hills, the venerable trees, the leaping brooks. The land, crossed here and there with gray stone fences, looked old, not worn and gullied, but possessed of a dreamy charm, lying under the softening and indefinable tints of time. How buoyant and breast-filling was the air; how one was almost impelled to run down a hill, and shouting like a boy, leap across a brook. The woodpecker flashed his flaming scarlet, and the bluebird, as if to soften the impudent glare, flew in his wake. Deep in a miniature valley where the ground was moist, stood an army-like

array of tall weeds, and a breeze stirring, the captain and his host saluted me with a nodding of their plumes. On a hill an old log house was mouldering into dust, the fort-home of the dauntless pioneer. From a mansion on another hill near by came the notes of a piano, the pioneer's great-great-granddaughter sullenly and perforce perfecting herself in the art of nerve torture.

I halted at a fence and looked at the ripples running across a field of heading wheat. From a nest in a bush a young bird stretched its fuzzy neck and cried for food and its cry was not in vain, for soon its mother was there with nourishment, and with a song, when with discerning eye she saw that I meant no harm.

How sweet the soft wind from that wooded slope! And how inspiriting that blooded colt, wallowing in the clover and racing across the meadow with blooms tangled in his mane. Who could not be bold in such an atmosphere! How glad I was that I came. Why, even the deliciousness of that deep breath on the brow of the shaded hill was more than gener-

ous payment for all the weariness of the trip. I sat down on a rock and read old Sam's letter. But it was too morbid to be mused over at such a time and in such a place. Of a boy loitering along the road I inquired the distance to the Acklin farm, and he answered, "On top of the second hill, just this side the creek." I pushed onward, growing stronger, climbing the hill with an ease and lightness that surprised me; and at the top a red brick house leaped into view, and a trembling weakness came upon me and my knees shook. It was the overexertion; I had been too free with my strength; I would soon recover, and I sat upon a bank by the roadside, but continued to tremble and to shudder as if with the cold. Ah, it was the black cigar I had smoked while musing over the rippling wheat. Afar off beyond the house I could see the white branches of sycamores, gleaming in the sun; and the sun was warm, but I shivered. I tried to laugh at myself but my teeth chattered. But even an attempt at self-ridicule is often salutary, and thus I found it, for

suddenly I was strong again. Yes, it was the black cigar. But I noticed an increase of strength down in the valley out of sight of the house, and a corresponding decrease as again I came within sight of the place. Without a sidewise glance I walked past the house and halting on the stone bridge, arching the creek, leaned over the parapet and gazed into the water. I heard a guinea hen on the hill, the defiant challenge of a game cock; and I thought of the turkey gobbler that strutted at the heels of old man Carson. I looked up at the house and saw tall lilacs standing high above the garden wall. A blue curtain fluttered at a dormer-window. The burnished tip of a lightning rod shot me in the eye with a sun-arrow. Why had not some one hailed me as I passed? Where was the boasted hospitality of Kentucky? I walked back and would, I verily believe, have passed a second time, but for the appearance of a woman at the gate—Mrs. Acklin. And I marched up to her and she knew me in an instant and appeared glad to see me.

"But how surprised I am," she said when we had shaken hands.

"Yes, I am surprised myself. I—the fact is, I had to go to my old home to settle the affairs of a delinquent estate, and suddenly found that my duty called me to this neighborhood."

"And I am very much pleased that it did. Come in."

She knew that I would prefer to sit in the airy cool of the veranda, and she drew forward a large rocking chair, with a seat of split hickory; she brought a palm-leaf fan, edged with green ribbon, talking constantly the while, telling me how pleased she was to see me; but confound it, did she live here alone? Where were the other members of the family? She clipped off a rose that was nodding in a morning nap, and pinned it on my coat. She called a negro girl and ordered for me a tumbler of water fresh from the well.

"I am very anxious for you to meet Mr. Acklin," she said. "Zaleme has told him a great deal about you, but he knew of you any-

way, as he keeps very close track of the speeches made in Congress, and he is pleased to know that you are going to the Senate. He's out somewhere but is likely to be back at any moment."

No doubt of it, but where was that young woman? By what peculiar perversity was it that I was thus denied all information of her? She might be yachting on Lake Superior for all I had been able to learn.

"You are all well, I suppose, Mrs. Acklin."

"Oh, yes, as well as could be expected. I had a slight attack of rheumatism some time ago, but it soon passed off. Mr. Acklin declared that it was all my own fault. He is a vegetarian."

"Is Miss Zaleme's health good?"

"Yes, very good, indeed. She went fishing with a party of friends not long ago and caught a slight cold, but it yielded to treatment."

"If I remember rightly she is fond of home; that is to say, she doesn't go visiting very often."

“Yes, very fond of home. She doesn’t really go out enough. It’s so warm, and you have walked so far in the sun. Won’t you have some more water?”

“No, thank you. What a profusion of flowers you have in the yard and what roses! I should say that Miss Zaleme and yourself are fond of them.”

“Oh, yes, and Mr. Acklin, too. He surely will be here soon, and how surprised he will be to see you, having heard so much about you, and of course not expecting you.”

Strong within me was the desire to say, “Madam, I am tired of this senseless skirmish. Where the deuce is that daughter of yours?” but I didn’t; I gave her a sickly smile and said “yes.”

“How long do you expect your business to detain you in this part of the country?”

I took some papers out of my pocket, looked at them and answered: “I can’t tell exactly; am expecting to get away in a few days, but it might possibly be a month.”

“You are exceedingly busy, I suppose?”

"Yes, very. But I cannot permit the work entailed by—ahem—personal ambition to interfere with the settlement of an estate intrusted to me in all—ahem, hem—confidence."

"Of course not. I'm sorry that Zaleme—Lucy, oh Lucy, run yonder and drive the chickens out of the garden. They are scratching up everything."

"You were going to say that you were sorry about something."

"Yes; well it couldn't have been very important, for I've forgotten what it is."

"Something about Miss Zaleme, I believe."

"Oh, sure enough. I was going to say I was sorry she isn't at home to——"

"At some eastern seaside?"

"Oh, no; it's not the time of year, and besides we never go there. She is over at Major White's. She and Miss Rhoda White are like sisters. She drove over this morning and is going to stay until tomorrow."

"Yes. I am sorry, for I may get through with my business in town by late this evening,

and in that event shall be compelled to start for home at once."

"Then I'll send for her, for I know she'll be disappointed if——"

"Oh, no, no. It's of no conse—I mean it wouldn't be right to break up her visit."

"Why, she can go over there any time—only five miles—and besides Rhoda can come home with her. Lucy, oh, Lucy, tell Jim to ride over to Major White's and tell Miss Zaleme to come home and bring Miss Rhoda with her—that Mr. Howardson of Texas is here."

"Madam, I beg of you——"

"Oh, it won't make any difference with her, and besides, Rhoda will come. Ah, here's Mr. Acklin now."

A tall, spry old gentleman, pale and with grayish mustache, came up the walk. When my name was mentioned there was a flush of surprise on his face. The heartiness of a hand-shake may be counterfeited, but it seems that there is always something to tell us when the warmth and the grip are just right; and I felt that his welcome was genuine. He

leaned his chair back against the baluster, his hat off, the vines about his head, a picture of refined and honest manhood, and yet about him there was a touch of oddity. His manner was easy and his talk was free, and my mind could but dwell upon the exceeding brightness of his eye. I fancied that gradually he was drifting toward a cherished subject, and so it proved. From the state of his health he began a disquisition upon diet, and his wife quietly fled.

"And I want to say," said he, "that the time will come when no civilized man will eat of food that has breathed! Why, think of it—what an outrage it is!"

I thought of it and agreed that it *was* an outrage.

"Mr. Howardson, let me shake hands with you again. I am more than glad to welcome to my house a man of your standing and ability. Such men, sir, are needed in public places, at the council fires of the nation. It has been—now let me see how long since I

ate meat. Oh, a number of years, and since then I have been more of a man."

"I have no doubt of it."

"Of course you haven't, for you are a man of sense, but there are others who are not sensible. Society is not composed of intelligence, Mr. Howardson. Think of a piece of beef, sir; think of it."

It was near noontime and I thought of it. The old gentleman continued: "The desire to eat it does not belong so much to barbarism as to cannibalism. Don't you know it?"

I said that I knew it. But it was hard to give him my attention, for my mind was wandering up and down the turnpike, sometimes on the bridge, and sometimes in a tree, it seemed, seeking to discover Zaleme coming toward the house. He said something about the physical and mental effect of an exclusive diet of fruit and nuts, though he was not so extreme as to exclude common vegetables, and bread if made properly, and I gave him the attention of a dull ear, the other one quickening with every sound that came from the road. But

to prove that I was heedful, I asked if he ate fish and for a moment his countenance looked as if a neuralgic pain had shot him in the face.

"Gracious, no, Mr. Howardson. Fish have lived."

I was now like certain sea fish—in deep water, and before realizing it I had said: "I know, but I mean mackerel."

"Mackerel, Mr. Howardson! Why, sir, a mackerel has lived!"

"Yes, but in most instances it has been so long ago that—that——"

"Oh, some of your drollery, I see. Very good, yes, first-rate. I couldn't see what you were leading to, for of course you knew that I wouldn't eat a fish."

He had unwittingly caught me at a moment of awkward stumbling, and out of gratitude I strove to pay him more attention, but with all my effort my spirit wandered off, and I heard him as one hears the droning of a bee. Suddenly there was but one sound in the world, the sharp clap of hoofs on the hard

road; and with forgetful eagerness I sprang out of my chair, pulled aside the vine curtain and peered toward the bridge. And I saw a buggy coming.

"Has your horse got loose?" the old gentleman inquired. In the South, and especially in Kentucky, when a man is seized with any sudden emotion the most natural inference is that his horse has broken loose.

"Oh, no, I walked."

"Ah, an example for the meat-eating and horse-riding young fellows about here. There was a time, sir, when my only exercise was in racing round and round to catch a horse in order to ride a mile. But since learning how to eat, I walk."

The buggy drew up at the gate and I began earnestly to talk to Mr. Acklin, not even looking down the walk when I heard light footsteps and the thrilling tinkle of laughter. And there she was in all her radiance with moistened lip—dew on a ripening cherry—and eyes that proved the glory of God. In our sober moments we know that such comparisons can

come only out of a sort of delirium; and it was with awkwardness and a violent lurching, I am constrained to believe, that I floundered from the sea of my own swimming senses in time properly to realize that I was presented to Miss Rhoda White. And in an instant my fancy seized upon the belief that in the twilighted pleasure of semi-despair she was sighing over a disappointment of the heart. Her face was pale and in her wan smile there was an assurance that it was the last. She was tall and fragile, and at times appeared to turn her attention to the cultivation of a cough, distressful in degree as it claimed a whole or a part of her energy.

"Well, who would have thought that I should ever see you here," said Zaleme, standing with her back toward the baluster, her hands upon the railing, her head among the closing blossoms of the morning glory vine. "Why, I thought you were out in the thick of the fight, with your sleeves rolled up—like Uncle Carson."

"I was until during a sort of armistice when

I came to Nashville and then to this place to attend to business of an important nature."

"Well," she replied, radiant as a painting in advantageous light, "if I never were thankful to business before I am now."

"Oh, yes, indeed," said Rhoda White, with a sigh.

"And how is your friend, Mr. Hall?"

"Looking up—because he can't look down any deeper. I received a letter from him this morning."

"Did you? How I should like to read it. Is it so private that you won't let me? Please let me read it. May I?"

"Not now, but before I return you—may."

"It will have to do, but it is vague. Isn't it, Rhoda?"

And with a smile that came slowly and faded quickly away, Rhoda answered: "As vague as the mysterious whispers we hear upon the mountain side."

Was this woman a romantic and sentimental depressor? I would have been willing to take oath that she had never seen a mountain and

had never heard whisperings other than those from the lips of some enamored swain. Did she spin the silken threads that bound Zaleme to the past?

"Dad," Zaleme spoke up, "don't you remember Miss Callie Morris—married Gus Torey? I saw her and her baby today, the sweetest little thing you ever saw in your life. How I did want to run away with it!"

"Well," said the old man, laughing, "Mr. Howardson will think you are a child-stealer."

"I often feel the instinct of one. If the Church had never done anything but to paint the picture of the Mother and the Child—that alone ought to be enough to Christianize the world."

The ringing of a bell called us to the dining room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SANG OLD SONGS.

At the head of the table, on a great blue-bordered dish, there must have been at least half a dozen spring chickens, fried by the supreme judge of something good to eat—an old negress. And though still dazzled and often in a tremor when I looked at Zaleme, the walk from town had honed my appetite. I sat at the right hand of Mr. Acklin. "This is not for us," he said to me, drawing the dish of chicken toward him, "but for those," he added with a smile, "who have not climbed up to our level. To show our liberality we do not banish such food from our table. Rhoda, you want a wish bone, I know. Mr. Howardson, here we have some very fine peanut butter. I think you'll like it; and help

yourself to this cauliflower. I wouldn't take too much salt—has a most distressful and drying effect upon the system. We will take some of this raw cabbage. The cooked has been boiled with meat."

"Why, Mr. Howardson," cried Zaleme, "you didn't tell me you were a vegetarian."

"Of course not," her father spoke up, "why should a man stand upon a house-top and shout a virtue: couldn't you perceive it from his health and strength?"

In the center of the table there was a boiled ham, stuck full of cloves. "What we call a chinquepin ham," said Mr. Acklin, "the hog having been fattened upon chinquepin acorns; and during the days when I plodded in the mire of dietary ignorance, I thought it particularly sweet. But if the sight of it is at all disagreeable to you I'll have it removed."

"Oh, no, no, not at all."

And I had heard my father talk of chinquepin hams; and I remembered when the gastric aspiration of every boy in the south was to grace his appetite with a fried spring chicken.

"Here is some very nice dry gluten, Mr. Howardson, and here is a dish of most nutritious granola. I always find these carbon crackers most excellent, and Lucy," he said, speaking to the negro girl, "bring Mr. Howardson a glass of milk with lime water. Well, sir, you have no idea what a pleasure it gives me to welcome you to my home. Rhoda, what's the Major doing?"

"Just worrying with the field hands. I beg him and beg him to take things easier but he won't."

"Ah, and he never will until he stops eating meat. Why, look at me, younger in spirit and in mind than I was twenty-five years ago. Help yourself again to the dry gluten, Mr. Howardson. It won't hurt you."

Zaleme spoke and I forgot my enforced adoption of the old man's diet: "You must come out to see us at least every other day as long as your business keeps you in this part of the country. And you must be sure to come next Sunday, day after tomorrow. Rhoda, can't you come then, too?"

Rhoda coughed and said, "No, I'm afraid not, dear."

"Why, are you expecting some one?"

And now the stare which she bent upon Zaleme was full of sorrowful surprise and rebuke. "How can you speak so lightly? You know that some one has come and gone afar off, I won't say into the boundless space of eternity, but perhaps into the careless wanderings of——"

"Rhoda, you know I didn't mean——"

"Of course not, dear, and now there is nothing to forgive, even if I should search ever so long to find it. Mr. Howardson, while here you must go to a meeting of our Swinburne Club. The next meeting will be held at Captain Grayson's, ten miles down the creek from here."

I knew that Rhoda was a good girl, that she was twin sister to sympathy, but on this occasion I could have wished that she had gone with whomever he was, "into the careless wanderings of" it made no difference whither. Mrs. Acklin was a sort of illumined shadow,

and it was easy to get away from her and I could manage to break loose from the old gentleman; but this pale weeper at the death bed of sentiment—there was no way to dispose of her. After dinner Rhoda, Zaleme and I went into the hillside orchard that sloped gracefully down to the creek. In the cool shade we sat upon the bluegrass turf. Whenever a silence fell Rhoda gave us a few staves of a song which long since had passed its tearful prime. Nearly all of her heroes and heroines were dead, and those living were in a sad plight, heartbroken over unfaithfulness. She left us and wandered along the stone wall to gather flowers. It was a relief.

“I won’t forget my promise to let you read Old Sam’s letter.”

“Well, but you put it off so.”

“And when you read it you will know why.”

“Oh, now you make me more anxious than ever. Is it so—terrible?”

“I think it has its terrors.”

“Oh, now, don’t be provoking. I believe you are—are guying me. I know he

wouldn't say anything harsh to you; he thinks too much of you. Oh, perhaps he has said something about me. Did he?"

"No, your name is not——"

"Oh, to be inferred then. Don't tease me. Let me read it."

"Not now. Do you know why I came to this town?"

"Why, yes, to attend to business."

"No, to see you."

"I still am weeping, my lone watch keeping," sang Rhoda above our heads. She scattered flowers upon us, and then with a sigh sat down. She asked me if I could tell fortunes by looking at the hand, and I told her that I had found more misfortune than fortune by looking at hands—such as had been dealt to me, and she cried out: "Oh, shame on you, you've played cards. What do you think of that, Zaleme?"

"I haven't any right to think evil of it, Rhoda."

"Oh, now, dear, you know I didn't mean anything, I——"

Zaleme laughed. "Why, of course you didn't."

"No, dear, honestly I didn't."

She was too tender for me. I was afraid of wounding her. I knew of such a girl years ago, and now she is fat and the wife of a horse doctor, but this knowledge did not relieve the necessity of care now. But why didn't Rhoda go away and gather more flowers, a cartload of them?

We returned to the house where Mr. Acklin sat upon the veranda, with a chair in front of him, piled with books, some one's theories on health. He caught up a dark, threatening volume and declared that I must take it to town with me and read it. But perhaps I had read it? I looked at the title. No, I had not read it, but had read a long review which had given me a clear idea of it. That wouldn't do. I must read the book itself. Oh, nothing could give me more pleasure.

On the old fashioned sofa in the parlor Zaleme sat close beside me; and I breathed that perfume again. And surely nowhere on

earth was there such a breath of sweetness. Was the spirit of love like the essence of a flower, and could it be *smelled* like an incense? Rhoda was with us, and what annoyed me was the fact that she did not seem to annoy Zaleme. Nothing could stand out more clearly than the fact that she was going to give me serious trouble, not only by her presence, but by her influence as well. But she was not malicious; she had suffered an attack of sentiment and it had not broken out properly. And now in the fever of such a disease myself, I could not give her over to complete condemnation. I asked her to sing, and going to the piano she touched a chord that ran like a faded ribbon back into the past and a face as wan as her own arose before us, the face of Lorena, heroine of the song over which our maiden aunts in days gone by shed tears of sweetest sorrow. And how fitted she was to sing it, frail and sentimental; and through recollection's half-closed eyes I could see white crape tied upon the door knobs of long ago. But in my heart there was no irreverence; my eye

might have been humorous, but in the sympathy of a kindred ailment I must have given her tear for tear. With Zaleme so near, any voice might have passed for truest melody. In the soft light, with my eye not now so fantastically dazzled by the fitful blaze of her beauty, there was at first what must have been an unconscious, followed by what I know to be a conscious, effort of search to find some blemish about her, some flaw to assist—hope. And though some men might not have thought her handsome, to me she was without a flaw. At night the fire-hunted deer stands entranced, his eye ablaze, blind to all except a fascinating light; and often it is so with man, in the glare of passion's fire. But I was determined to see her better, and by sheer force I began to succeed. Her dress was cut low and on the V shape of her gleaming flesh was a heart of gold.

When Rhoda's song was done I urged her to sing again and had I been bluntly true to myself I would have added, "Yes, and louder next time." Ah, and when before had I heard

the "watch dog is snarling for fear of Annie darling"?

"You remember what I said to you out in the orchard?"

"Oh, yes, that you would let me read Mr. Hall's letter."

"I told you why I had come to Kentucky."

Her eyes were full upon me. "You should not have——"

"But didn't you say that you thanked the business that brought me here?"

"Yes, for I thought——"

"That I really had come on business and not especially to see you."

"Yes. But—but—of course I am glad to see you. I had thought many and many a time of your kindness to me."

"But why should I not have come to see you?"

"I am afraid that I can't tell you."

"Does the cause lie in—in the jewel case?"

"You must not ask me that."

She looked at me and her face was sad.

"Won't you continue to be my friend—the very best friend that I ever had? Won't you?"

Rhoda hushed her singing and sat down beside Zaleme. Was Old Sam's letter strengthening me? I was determined not to accept her "no." How sweet were those old songs, and I urged Rhoda to sing, but she shook her head. Had she caught my words and made a note of my distress? But more important, was she to be my enemy?

CHAPTER XIX.

CONFEDERATES IN A CONSPIRACY.

Rhoda offered no further opportunity. I begged for another old song, but she said that the old songs made her sad. A new one, then; but she shook her head. New songs did not appeal to her nature. So, after this, what I said to Zaleme might just as well have been shouted on the veranda, so general was the tone and the text of it all; and when I arose to take my leave, I fancied that the faded sentimentalist was pleased. But in one moment more I forgot that the poor thing had ever lived, for in Zaleme's eye there was a look, the coming and the going of a star, it seemed, just for the hundredth part of a moment,—that was all, but it was enough, and my heart was fluttering with its new wings, trying to fly,

when I slipped out upon the veranda. Mr. Acklin bounded from his seat, caught up one of his dark books and declared that I must take it to town with me as a protection against the loneliness which inevitably we find in a strange place.

"Oh, but it's so far to carry it, dad," cried Zaleme, heaven-sent reliever of man's burden.

"For a meat-eater it would be far, my dear," said Mr. Acklin, delivering the book to me, "but for one of the dietary elect, I might say it is as nothing. Now, Mr. Howardson, don't forget that you have an engagement with us Sunday; and by the way I have a brother in town and I want you to meet him. He keeps a livery stable and is the largest man physically in the State of Kentucky. And, think of it, the only brother I have is addicted to roast pig. You needn't bring that book back with you Sunday—it takes some time to get at all of its merits. And again let me tell you that it is with pleasure that I welcome you to my home."

That heavy book became heavier at each suc-

cessive rise in the road and it might have been a treatise on appetite instead of health, so greatly did it promote the necessity to eat; and having been denied hog and chicken, both flesh and fowl now appealed to me. But at supper in the hotel dining room I sat in a cold perspiration, in fear lest Mr. Acklin should leap through the door and denounce me for eating the forbidden fruit of a fattened calf. I was suspicious of the head waiter who stood looking at me. Was he storing up an accusation? To an uneasy mind any suspicion is reasonable. I beckoned to him and when he came and stood beside me I asked him if he knew Mr. Acklin. His reply was that he often had the pleasure of waiting on him.

"Ah, and he has taken it into his head that I am not a meat eater and I don't want him to know that I am. Do you understand?"

He looked surprised, as if he could not understand, but I gave him a coin and the situation became clear.

And now I began to ponder upon the time that must pass before Sunday—one whole day.

Why had she made it so long? And with the thought my heart grew heavy, but suddenly came back to me the memory of the star in her eye; and I walked forth into the park to muse, and a thousand times did I see that star quickly come and go.

The next morning a boy from the afternoon newspaper called and gave to me for approval a proof slip upon which was the following:

"The Hon. Lucian Howardson, next U. S. Senator from Texas, is in the city, having come in his capacity of lawyer to settle up a large Tennessee estate which has a ramification over into this part of the country. He is an organizer and a leader of men and without a doubt the announcement of his candidacy is equivalent to his election by the legislature. Mr. Howardson is a pronounced vegetarian, believing that the time will come when a man who eats meat will be regarded as a cannibal."

The boy said that the paper was waiting to go to press; and begging him to get back to the office as fast as he could, I followed him

across the park, up a flight of narrow stairs into a close, ill-smelling room where sat a man smoking a cob pipe. I introduced myself and before I could tell him that the publication of the paragraph would forever damn me, he asked me how many copies of the paper I wanted. He was astonished when I explained the cause of my visit.

"Why, I got my information from Mr. Acklin," said he, tossing his pipe upon the table and taking up a palm leaf fan. "He is one of my oldest subscribers and I have learned to have faith in him, but if he is wrong——"

"Oh, it's not that," I broke in; "not that, I assure you, but the fact is——"

"I understand," he interrupted. "You are willing to announce your principles in Kentucky, but are not quite ready to have them known in Texas. I am sorry, for Mr. Acklin and I were gratified to think that we were at last to have so able an exponent of our views in——"

"My dear sir," said I, "you don't quite comprehend my situation. If I am to do good,

I must first attain the place where good can be accomplished. And do you suppose a cattle growing country would elect a man who denounces meat?"

"Why, of course not," he laughed, fanning himself faster and faster. "Suppose you write a notice yourself."

"The fact is, I'd rather you wouldn't say anything."

"All right, we'll do as you desire. Just make yourself at home here till I gather up a few ends and tie them together and then we'll go out to where they stir things round with a spoon, and take something."

He hovered over a pad of paper and for half an hour or more speeded his pencil as a Kentucky farmer, a lover of horses, would speed a colt; he tore off page after page till six or eight loosely written pages lay before him, and then grabbing them up, he rushed into another room. He came back and began to look for something upon the table, raking up papers, overturning a pot of paste; he hastened into the other room, was gone a few moments,

returning with a puzzled look upon his face. "I had an editorial roast on the city council," said he, "but I can't find it. However, it'll keep warm," and then with a most pleasing change of countenance he added, "Now, sir, we'll go."

He conducted me down a narrow alley into a small, carpeted room known as the Side-Board. A polite old negro came forward to greet us, too humble to shake hands, but indulging in many expressions of welcome. His place was quaintly furnished, tables with twisted legs, a great side-board with many a merry face carved upon it, and particularly a silver pitcher of ancient make, heirloom from the old world, and now full of a mint-steeped liquor. A horse-hair sofa offered a luxurious seat; the old man placed a neatly spread table in front of us, and thus we sat, talking of politics and then of Mr. Acklin. He was known throughout the community, my new associate declared, as one of the most steadfast of men, with a steel grip upon principle. And his daughter was much like him.

So profound was her love of truth that she was never known to break her word, even if lightly given, upon a matter of no importance. She was engaged to marry—here he hesitated and all aflame I urged him to proceed, but he sighed and shook his head.

“There is something singular about her engagement,” said I. “The other day I met a young lady—are you acquainted with Miss Rhoda White?”

“I hope you’ll pardon me for not introducing myself. My name is White and Rhoda is my sister.”

And I sat there, not knowing what to say. Why was Zaleme so constant a concern to Rhoda, and why did this man sigh over the fact that once she was engaged to marry? And the picture and the lock of hair, dropped by the Mexican who had striven to murder me, the Alamo, all arose frost-covered in my sight. My musing was broken in upon by the old negro, who came forward with a dish of broiled birds, which he placed upon the table.

“He sets the finest lunch of anybody in the

country," said Mr. White. "Lately he has been feeding us on young pigeons—squabs—and here we have a whole dish."

I looked at him and he looked at me and we both of us looked at the dish of squabs. "Mr. White," said I, determined to clear myself at least in part, "I wish to make a sort of confession. While out at Mr. Acklin's yesterday I agreed with something he said and instantly he took up the notion that I was a vegetarian, and——"

Back upon the sofa White spread himself with an echoing roar; and in his face I read a counterpart of the mistake made with regard to me; and we both laughed till the tears rolled. "Years ago," he said as soon as he was able, "I did the same thing and in his mind I became a vegetarian, and, sir, I may have nerve enough to fight a man, but I haven't the strength of heart to tell him he was wrong. And I've got all my people and all his trained not to betray me, but I am always afraid he may find me out. I went to a barbecue not long ago, where they cooked sheep, hogs and even oxen

whole, and following my usual custom, I looked about to see if I could find Mr. Acklin. I never had found him at such a place, still, I was afraid. Well, on this occasion, after deciding that he wasn't there, I gathered up a hunk of mutton and was devouring it when I saw him step out from behind a tent and turn directly toward me. He was so close that I couldn't throw the meat away, and it would have choked me to death if I'd attempted to swallow it, so I shoved it into the inside pocket of a light coat, snatched off my hat, wiped my hands on my hair and stood facing him. He came up, held out his hand, and instantly I was taken with a pain in the stomach and pretended not to notice his greeting. Well, sir, he did not leave me for an hour or more, and all this time that mutton was oozing grease, and it began to show through, of course, when some ladies came up. But just at that moment I had cause to thank the Lord; a shower of rain began to fall. Help yourself to these birds."

And while we were eating I detected him as from time to time he shot a glance at the door,

afraid of discovery; and I took his fear unto myself and multiplied it, having more to lose.

White and I parted the best of friends, sworn confederates in a dangerous conspiracy; and I then went round to the livery stable kept by the vegetarian's brother Stephen. If to eat flesh makes one gróss it could well have been sworn that this man in his time had swallowed vast herds of cattle. He was so enormous that his great height could not easily be estimated. He was sitting on a long bench, which he filled, and he was laughing at the joke of a skinny fellow who stood near, and he shook everything and the air vibrated with him. I waited until he was still and then introduced myself; I told him not to get up, but he arose, swallowed my hand with one of his and let the other one drop upon my shoulder, and its weight felt like the hind quarter of a well-fed beef. He laughed, pleased that I had recognized his immediate influence, invited me to a seat on his bench, sat down and then roared when I looked for a place to sit, all the room having been taken. He bellowed something and a negro boy came

running with a chair; then I sat down and stole a study of him when he was not looking. But unlike nearly all over-large men he was not sensitive to the surprise and curiosity of strangers. Doubtless an enforced philosophy had driven him or dragged him beyond that point. He said that he was pleased to see me; his niece and his herb-eating brother had spoken of me. "And by the way," said he, winking at the skinny man, "he told me that you are along with him in that line"; and then he bellowed: "Bill, put some oats and corn in trough of No. 10—plenty of hay in the rack—gentleman be here for dinner." Then he roared and shook. He got up after a time and begged my pardon for his rudeness, but he was seized again and walked back whooping to the far end of the stable, his great bulk shutting out the light that came from the rear. I liked him. He was a great engine, a motive power of good humor. Men with keener minds might find distress; he was looking for a chance to laugh.

I took him into my confidence, telling him of his brother's mistake regarding me, and he

rewarded me with the loudest laugh I ever heard. It seemed a burst of impulsive gladness from the heart of all animal nature, and I felt that he was to be my friend. It is not always true that big men are generous or broad in their views. The greatest scoundrel I ever knew was of prodigious size; the thickness of the woe-woven garment that enrobes the soul of man does not argue the greatness of the soul. But the broad, kindly smile of this man, the soft light of his ox-like eye, and more than all, the fountain, yes, the torrent of mirth within him, atoned for a thousand big rascals of the flesh. He had never heard of my speeches in Congress; he did not read anything and he thought of naught except that which his physical view revealed, but conditions had made him wiser than a political economist.

"Now, while you are in town," said he, "there ain't no use of walking, especially when you want to go out to my brother's house. You just come here and get any rig you want and it sha'n't cost you a cent."

I saw that he meant what he said and I

thanked him. He told me that for a long time certain upstarts in the town thought to show wisdom by calling him Falstaff. He did not know but that Sir John met all the requirements that an American citizen should meet, but his brother enlightened him; so he grabbed one of the upstarts as he was passing the stable, held him and roared so mightily in his ear that he was likely to lose his hearing, and since then they had shown him more respect. But while listening to him, and interested in what he said, why did I feel that the skinny fellow was an intruder? I wanted this big man to tell me about Zaleme's engagement. But there the fellow stood, to me an assassin, letting the life blood out of opportunity. We were near the door, and looking down the street I saw Mr. Acklin coming, his gold fob shining in the sun. He shook hands cordially and appeared to be pleased upon seeing me with his brother. "I told you he was the biggest man in the country," said he, "and now you know it. How are all, Stephen?"

"All well, John."

"Molly got over her cold?"

"Yes, she's about as usual."

"I heard that someone stole your iron-gray mare, Stephen?"

"Yes, fellow named Patton. Caught him yesterday."

"What have they done with him?"

"They put him in jail to wait for his trial, but I went on his bond and got him out. Poor devil, never had a dollar in the world—luck has always been against him; his horse died and he didn't have hair nor hide to make a crop with—wife and six children—and as his corn needed plowing he caught up the first horse he found. I told him to go on home and not bother about the court."

"But how is he going to make his crop?"

"Well, I lent him the iron-gray mare, John." And as if he had sprung upon his brother the best of all jokes, he roared and shook himself.

"You were right, Stephen," said Zaleme's father.

CHAPTER XX.

STEPHEN WANTED MUSIC.

The brothers began to talk about matters which concerned only themselves, and I returned to the hotel with a strong feeling against the skinny fellow who had dealt a death blow to my opportunity. But after supper I went back to the stable in the hope that Brother Stephen might keep open at night, but the place was closed. A screech owl hooted in a wagon shed. A negro, whistling with the melody of a flute, came walking past me. I broke into his music to ask him if Mr. Acklin were likely to return that night to the stable. He answered that he thought not, but that I might find him at the Side-Board. Long before reaching the place I knew that I was not to be disappointed. A musical bellow, like a bass horn burst of Wag-

ner, told me that he was there. He sat in a great chair made especially for him, singing with Editor White, whose voice was completely hushed in the rafter-shaking uproar; and on a table in front of him was a "private" mug of ale. He got up and bawled me a welcome, and I thought that he was drunk, but he wasn't. White whispered that there was not in all the town enough liquor to intoxicate him. But he was not disposed to drink to excess—had never been known to show the effect of potation, and never indulged in more than a gallon of ale at a draught. A peaceable disposition served to illumine his other virtues. Once while sitting in his accustomed place a sudden "difficulty" arose and shots began to fly, but instead of taking a hand or in any way giving countenance to one faction or the other, he bawled out: "And in the meantime, bring me something to drink." Being a man of means he contributed largely to the temperance cause. To slim men he said, "Don't drink. It will make you too heavy"; and to heavy men he had been known to give this advice: "Let it alone, it will make

your pockets too light." On one occasion at a temperance speaking it was discovered that the orator was suddenly stricken with the influence of the apple and the corn. He toppled and fell, and then Stephen arose. "Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "somewhere, I don't know where, we are told to forgive a fallen brother, and if this fellow ain't down I don't know who is. Therefore we'll sponge him and let him go ahead with his talk." Of course there was but little truth in all this drollery, but it showed the character with which a humorous people were pleased to invest the big liveryman.

Stephen had a chair brought for me and placed near his own, and then with that unoffending patronage which seems always to come of great flesh, he clapped his hand on my shoulder and remarked that from what he had seen he did not think that I was a very bad lot.

"Why, he is going to be the next Senator from the great State of Texas," said White.

"That's all right," Stephen replied. "Yes, sir, it's all right, and we hope it won't do him any harm. Oh, Sam!" he roared, and the old

negro off somewhere in the darkness answered, "Comin', sah." And when he had come Stephen thus made known what he wanted: "How long do you reckon it would take you to cook one of them peacocks I saw out there?"

"W'y, I doan know, sah. Da's sorter hard w'en da's sot in dar ways, an' I reckon dese out yere is sot."

"Great Caesar!" White cried out, "you are not thinking of eating again, are you? It hasn't been three hours since you had supper."

Stephen clapped a hand on White's leg. "But, Tommy, it has been at least three years since I ate a peacock, and I'm hungry for one. But if there's any objections we'll compromise on—Sam, bring in half a dozen cans of cove oysters with a peck or two of crackers and pepper sauce." White frowned, and in the yielding tenderness of his nature Stephen added: "Never mind, Sam, there seems to be objection to the motion. Tommy, I came within one of offending a man today—fellow named Carter; reckon you remember him. Well, he came along and as I hadn't seen him for some time

I asked him how he was doing, and he looked sad and replied that he had buried his father the day before. And before I knew what I was about I 'lowed it was the best thing he could do. 'What!' he yelled; and I thought he was going to draw something, but I put my hand on him and told him to wait a minute, and then I said: 'Your father was dead, wasn't he?' 'Of course he was,' says he. 'Well then,' says I, 'isn't burying a dead man about the best thing you can do with him?' He said yes, if it was looked at that way, and I told him that was the only way to look at it."

"He ought to have hired half a dozen men, taken up a saw log and knocked you down," said White, and the negro Sam, standing behind him, snorted and ducked back into the darkness of an adjoining room.

"Yes, if you want to punish a man for telling of the truth," Stephen replied. Then he bawled for Sam, and the negro came snickering back into the light. "Sam, can you get Pete and Mose with their fiddle and horn and Tab with his bull fiddle? We want music."

"Da gone ter a dance, sah."

"What sort of a dance?"

"A cullud dance, sah."

"In town here?"

"Yes, sah; 'tween yere an' de riber."

"Well, you go and tell the town marshal I say to go over there and break up that dance. I want the music."

"Ef dat ain't de ginerel fix o' de cullud man I'se de bigges' liar in de worl'," the negro shouted, shaking with laughter, and he seized a chair to keep from falling. "You'se got s'ciety an' politics mixed up an' all told right dar." I felt the house shaking, and looking at Stephen I saw that he was silently laughing. "Here," he said, holding out a piece of money; "there's a dollar for your smartness. Wisdom ought to be paid as well as labor."

I wondered how long before White would take his leave. I had seen the time when such jollity would have danced my heart upon a gleeful knee, but now it was an oppression and I was forced to keep the secret of its mockery. It is a sad condition when the mind fights the

heart, and with introspective ear I could hear the din of such a conflict. After years of study and of yearning I had a chance to seize the object of my ambition, but now I was throwing it away, chasing a butterfly through an orchard to catch a black beetle down in the marsh. I knew that my mind was right and that my heart was wrong, and I knew that in its sudden dashes the mind fought with a more desperate fierceness; but after all it was a guerrilla band when compared with the mustered forces of the heart. Why could there not be a medicine to cure the disease of love? Men are treated for nostalgia, which, after all, is a sort of love sickness. It seems that science ought to be able to distill a liquid from some sort of flower redder than love—but is love red? Sometimes it is black, like a flower murdered by the frost.

“Wake up,” said Stephen, letting his hand fall upon my shoulder. “Tomorrow’s Sunday and all we’ve got to do is—no, we are going out to John’s. And I want you to see the dinner they serve when I’m there. No stint, I bet you, when I’m ’round. I went out there once

and the negro woman had baked a shote—just right; and it was shote weather, one of the first cool days in fall. It was brought on the table, brown and juicy; and when I began to eat I could see John's mouth water, as he sat there with his gluten and pygnolia nuts, and after standing it as long as he could he said, 'Steve, would you mind going out to the stable and finishing up that thing?' and I said, 'Why, that's where corn and other vegetables are eaten, not meat,' and the women folks laughed at him. You'll be there, won't you, Tommy?"

"Well, I hardly think so. I don't eat there very often."

"Oh, yes, you are one of his supposed cranks. Why don't you break away and declare your independence?"

"Oh, well, because it would hurt him so to find that I was no longer a slave. I am like you; I don't like to wound people. No, not exactly like you. I wouldn't tell a man that the best thing they could do with his father was to bury him."

White was kind-hearted, no doubt, but like

the skinny fellow, he was killing my opportunity. I arose to go, hoping that Stephen would offer to walk over to the hotel with me, but he did not; he reached up and gave me a good-night grip; and as I passed out of the alley into the street I felt the air vibrating and I heard him bawling his midnight song.

CHAPTER XXI.

A MARBLE SHAFT BETWEEN US.

Consciousness came with a thrill the next morning. It was the day appointed by her; and before the sun's light was full upon the town I arose, and dressing myself, sat by the open window, musing upon the joy-riot of birds in the park. Hope was born anew of the soft air, and my heart arose with the sun. In the coming glory of the day, when molten gold is poured from the black furnaces of the night, even the most doubtful must feel the spirit of the world's Creator; and it is then that the heart takes fresh confidence. And surely mine was not to be thrown down and trampled into the dust. My inner being was full of this new hope, and there must have been an outward glow, for upon sitting down to breakfast the

head waiter, grown familiar, remarked that I had no doubt received good news. And how springy I felt when the time came to go, and how my heart leaped along the road; but the moment I saw the house I faltered and stood trembling on the top of the hill. Why had the half-sun so strengthened me and why now was the full blaze so weakening? And I believe that my coward legs would have taken me past the house, down to the bridge, to lean with heaviness upon the parapet and to sigh down at the water, had I not seen Zaleme standing at the gate. She came forward to meet me, with a rose in her mouth; she gave me her hand and then pinned the rose upon my breast, and for a moment I fancied that it was her heart with mine beating against it. And if she had told me that she came with the sunrise and had plucked the flower on her way through Paradise I would have believed her. As we passed under the vine at the steps of the veranda a blue sheen fell upon her hair, and upon the milk of her neck a rich cream arose. With an electric touch she put me into a great rocking-chair, brought

a palm-leaf fan and for a few moments playfully fanned me, laughing out her sweet words, words that I did not understand except that they were music. Then she sat down, and on a sudden I felt that she was repentant of her freedom and was changing toward me.

"Is your father well?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, he's always well."

"Your mother's well, I hope?"

"Oh, yes, mother is well."

We looked at each other and old Granny Nature was too strong; we laughed. But in a moment I was serious enough, for the old gentleman came walking out, with a black book, a very beetle of literature; and he grabbed me with enthusiasm and said: "My dear Howardson, here I have something that will delight us both, one hundred and fifty-six opinions on pygnolia nuts. You shall take it back to town with you when you go. Yes, sir, delighted to see you again. And how are your affairs progressing?"

I could have told him, but I didn't. I an-

swered that the estate was somewhat involved, but that I hoped soon to untangle it.

"Oh, I forgot to ask: You don't use much soda, do you?"

"In the settlement of estates—oh, you mean at the table—or in cooking, I might say. No, very little."

"Howardson, I am glad to hear you say that. It is another evidence of the fact of your wonderful common sense. Why, come out, my dear. Here is Mr. Howardson."

Mrs. Acklin, the luminous shadow of purity and cheerfulness, came out and gave me something white which I understood was her hand. I gave it back to her and she thanked me; and I caught Zaleme's eyes, and they were shouting in mirth—my heart could hear them. I asked Zaleme if Miss White were coming and was relieved of a great distress when informed that she was not. Mrs. Acklin went back into the house, like an obliging shadow, but Mr. Acklin sat there, refusing to budge, though he might have known that I wished him at the bottom of the sea. He asked me about some other in-

insipid food, and as they say in his State, I felt like "cursing him out." Zaleme began to speak and I forgot that there was an oath upon earth, except an oath breathed amid perfume at the altar. "Father," she said, "Nettie Goodwin has come back from Vassar."

"Ah, hah! Full of isms and the memory of cutting up live frogs, I suppose. Shouldn't be surprised but we'll hear from her pretty soon on some new scheme of political economy."

"I don't believe so," she replied. "I never did think much of her until yesterday, when she said that she would rather be a mother than to have all the education in the world."

"Then she is fitted to be one. Howardson, did you ever look very far into single tax?"

Lord of Hosts, was he preparing another infliction? But I gave him attention and with a corpse-like smile answered that I had not.

"Then, sir, there is additional wisdom in store for you. I have five volumes upstairs, and you shall take them home with you."

"Why, father," Zaleme cried, "Mr. Howardson isn't a pack horse."

"My dear, cry out at meat-eaters and not at men who have passed the age of barbarism. I warrant you he wouldn't feel the weight of fifty books."

I have no idea as to what I would have said, for just at that moment our attention was taken up with the arrival of Brother Stephen. He drove two strong horses hitched to a big buggy, and he made the vehicle's joints creak as he got out; and he came forward neat and enormous in a suit of white linen. He shook the veranda, then shook hands and then sat down upon a broad, bench-like chair which his brother dragged out for him. He asked for water and Zaleme brought it in a tin pail, laughing; and he turned it up and drank it all at a draught, I believe, though he may have taken two; rolled his eyes, after the manner of Hawthorne's ox, drinking at the trough of the town pump; put down the pail and smiled broadly in honor of the achievement. In spite of his great flesh he was not vulgar. His shirt bosom was spotless and his monstrous growth of wheat-straw hair was combed or knocked down rather neatly.

We began to laugh the moment he arrived, and Mrs. Acklin came out and laughed with us; a waddling negress, herself somewhat encumbered with flesh, caught sight of him and we could hear her laughing long after she returned to the kitchen.

"Well, everybody seems to be in good humor this morning," said Stephen.

"You always bring good humor with you," replied Mrs. Acklin.

"Ah, hah," cried Stephen, and he turned to his brother. "How do you account for that, John, when I ate a steak for breakfast a third as big as a horse blanket? Hah?"

"Oh, well, there is such a thing as being a great machine."

"Is there? Now I'll agree that you've got more education than I have, but I can lay you out on horse-sense."

"I don't know that I need so very much horse-sense," Brother John replied. "I don't run a livery stable."

I wondered why the idea that I had come to see his daughter had never seemed to enter Mr.

Acklin's mind; but it had not, so far as I was able to determine from his actions. Surely his wife must know, and why therefore had she not told him? And why, with the ingenuity which even the most ordinary country girl possesses, did not Zaleme herself contrive some means—but did she really care to see me alone? There was the point, and upon it I stuck and fretted. The brothers were forgetfully jovial in a genial tilt and I addressed myself to Zaleme.

“Miss White has had—trouble, hasn't she?”

“Yes, she has had her share of sorrow.”

“The loss of her mother?”

She looked at me and I thought that she was going to laugh as we had laughed a short time before, but she did not. She merely looked and then her eyes wandered off over the green fields that lay beyond the turnpike. “I wish she were here,” said I, “to sing an old song for me. But don't you sing old songs?”

“You talked while she was singing!” Was it roguery in her eye, or was it reproach?

"Did I? It must have been a sort of—inspiration."

She shook her head. "It must have been calculation," she replied.

"Calcu—why, I don't know what you mean."

"I mean that you intended to say something and said it."

"Yes, that is true. I urged you to tell me if you knew why I came. Was there so very much calculation in that? And tell me, did it displease you?"

"Oh, I didn't say that it displeased me."

"Thank you. But did it please you to know why I came?"

"When a woman is flattered she denies it."

"And were you merely flattered? Was that all?"

"Isn't that enough? Isn't it sufficient when a woman acknowledges flattery?"

"But you haven't acknowledged it."

"Haven't I? Then I won't. Look at that cloud, that fleece, that purple fan spread out. It reminds me of Texas. Don't you wish you were there now?"

"Yes, in the woods with you, sitting on that beflowered bank."

"Where you declaimed your barbarous blank verse. But I thought it was pretty."

"The blank verse?"

"The bank where the flowers grew."

"Oh, yes, so did I. Are there any such banks in the woods here?"

"Not so gay—not so Spanish. Our woods are prettiest in the fall."

"I must come back to see them. Will you walk with me then?"

"Yes, I am very fond of walking—in the fall."

She caught a quick glance from me and turned it like a piece of polished steel. Surely she had changed since she pinned the rose on my coat. And was it because she fancied that I had felt a presumptuous encouragement? Was it her desire forever to keep me meekly near the earth? Over in a pasture a blooded colt was racing round and round. "Mine," she said, seeing that I was watching it. "A present from Uncle Stephen."

"And does it eat out of your hand?"

"Why, of course. Would you be afraid——"

And with mounting blood I broke in: "I wouldn't hesitate to eat poison——"

"Of course it's poison," interrupted Mr. Acklin. "The finest piece of beef in the world is poison."

"But it may be another man's meat," said Zaleme; and Stephen roared. "Touched you that time, John. If I didn't eat everything I wanted to what do you suppose would become of me?"

"Why," answered his brother, "you would probably shrink down to the size of about two ordinary men. Seriously, Stephen, look what I have accomplished since I began to live like a civilized being. I have taken the complete Chautauqua course——"

"And have found troubles that you didn't know existed before," Stephen struck in.

"No, pleasures. We must know in order to enjoy; we must feel in order to judge and to appreciate."

"And we must keep out of the way of school

teachers if we wish to enjoy ourselves," Stephen declared. "I never saw one that didn't bring just a little trouble with him. Wants to talk slow, as if that makes what he says heavy. When they come around me I say, 'Here, brother, say it—blow it out. I'd rather hear a stump-sucking horse than to have a man hem and haw and mouth his words trying to find one long enough. Blow it out.' If you'd burn up all the books and start over I believe the world would be better off. Why, confound it, you'll go crazy if you try to read the half of them. Let us have common sense. Why, if one man thinks he knows more than another he begins to put on airs over him. There can't be any true democracy as long as one man thinks he knows more than another."

Their controversy seemed to throw a sort of twilight about Zaleme and me and I was grateful, for it granted me a chance to speak to her, but there was not much of spirit in her reply—she appeared to be absorbed in something that lay beyond the fields. Dinner was announced and I was astonished at the short-

ness of the forenoon, but time is sometimes swift, even when we fret it away. At the table Mr. Acklin began to help me to his pasty foods, and Stephen shook with chuckling. He said that if he had thought about it he would have brought some millet for us, as he had some of excellent quality, recently shipped to him. "By the way, Liza," he said, speaking to his brother's wife, "when I was out here some time ago I thought you were making wild grape wine?"

"I was," Mrs. Acklin answered.

"But I don't see any of it, and I want to tell you that there ain't anything better than wild grape wine—if it's made right."

"Stephen, you know that I don't want any wine at my table."

"Oh, I know that—not the ordinary wine that you buy. If I hadn't known that I would have brought some along with me. And speaking about wine reminds me that I saw a china set some time ago, Liza, that would look mighty well on your table—don't know why it reminds me, but it does. John, what has become of that big silver mug you got at the

county fair as a premium for that blooded heifer? That was about as fine a calf as I ever saw, but I think Liza deserves more of the credit than you do. Now, I never tasted any juicier mutton than this. Some people object to sheep on account of what they call a woolly taste. That's what I like about it—when there are certain additions, you understand. With me it always called for wild grape wine—that's a fact, just wild grape wine. Claret, the sort we get even at the best places, ruins mutton, but wild——”

“Liza,” said Mr. Acklin, “let him have some of that wine.”

“Oh, no,” Stephen broke in, “not if it's against her principles, John. I wouldn't have thought about it, you know, if it hadn't been for this mutton. The next time I hope you'll have beef and then there won't be any temptation.”

Mrs. Acklin left the table and soon returned with the silver mug brimming with the red juice of the wild grape. She asked me if I would not honor her with drinking a goblet of it, and

I wanted it like a shark wants blood, but I was afraid of her principles; but, ah, the deliciousness of a moment later, a grateful look from Zaleme! Stephen "ah hahed" and smacked his lips. "Liza," said he, "you don't mean to tell me you made this? Oh, I know you did, but somebody must have advised you. Why, John, it takes experience to make wine like this. Now, some people would have made it a little too sharp or a little too sweet, but it is just right. You may help me to another piece of that mutton if—never mind. It would call for another mug of wine and—but if Liza has no objections—thank you." Mrs. Acklin took the mug and went out with it and Stephen looked after her with a broad smile, reminding me of the jack-o'-lantern we used to make of a pumpkin. How he overshadowed us, this great steam engine with gauge dancing. His mind lay in his cheerfulness, his fullness of life, and intellects compared with which his might have been but feeble, yielded to the domination of his flesh. And in the law and in politics I have often seen size win victory over merit.

The two mugs of wild wine, almost a gallon, I am sure, made Stephen tame enough, and he dozed on the veranda; and Mr. Acklin showed an inclination to nod. I asked Zaleme if she would walk with me in the orchard, and in her ready consent there was a delicious charm of manner. As we strolled forth I pulled at leaves and tall grasses, she at my side; and I said to myself: "If I should ever win you, perhaps in the years to come I might be able to study you closely, but now I am too much dazzled to see you clearly." At times I almost wished that she would do something to offend me, that I might study her defects. Surely it was not a love but a disease seeking relief. She talked with a frank charm and we heard our laughter echoing among the cliffs far down the creek. I thought I was plucking a lily, but it was her hand, and I held it as we walked along, and her cheeks were aglow and her eyes were cast down, as if she were nearly asleep, dreaming. And now her laughter did not echo among the cliffs; it was sweet and low and it echoed in my heart. I thought of the

wild grape wine as I gazed upon her lips, and I thirsted for them; but she leaped from me with a cry; and she stood gazing at me, her lips close and her eyes stern. What was that between her and me? A marble shaft not more than two feet high, a monument above a little mound. I leaned against an old apple tree and looked at her, and, ah, was she coming out of the dazzle? How pale she was, ghastly—freckled.

“Who—what is buried here?” I asked; and stooping over I saw the Alamo engraved upon the shaft. “I have asked you——”

“But you must not,” she replied. “Please don’t.”

“But I will. What does this mean? You won’t tell me. I de—I can’t demand. I beg, my heart begs, as old Sam Hall’s once begged. I am imploring you for—for life. Tell me and I—I pardon it all, I forgive everything.”

Oh, the glorious light that for a moment illumined her face. She clasped her hands over her bosom and looked upward and said to herself, “A love like this—thank God!” But sud-

denly she threw her hands apart, leaned toward me, straightened back and with a hard look in her eye she said: "You have nothing to forgive, nothing to pardon, Mr. Howardson. Let us go back to the house."

"But won't you please tell me what is buried here?"

"Something that is sacred to me. Let us go back."

"Not until you have told me."

"Don't urge me now. After a while I will tell you."

"But why not now? Don't you see how I am suffering? It is like a man pleading for his life. I have thrown away all of my dignity—everything. You can see. And now why——"

That light illumined her again. "Because I want to feel that I am loved; and when I tell you I can not listen again. Oh, don't try to understand me. I am not worth so much—love. But God knows—no, don't touch me! Would you have my soul sent to torment? Let me go back to the house."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LANTERN AND THE OATH.

I do not know how I got away from that place. It was like breaking out of a nightmare, a smothering spell. I don't believe I saw anything on the road to town; I didn't recall the valleys, a stream where I had to step upon stones, a toll gate where a fierce dog always barked. It was all a blank till I reached the tavern, and then I heard the clatter of dishes and inhaled an odor that sickened me. The air was close, I couldn't breathe, and I hastened out of the town and stood upon a hill where cannon were planted during the great war: I sat down under a tree. Martins flew past to their roost in the eaves of the churches; dusk came up out of the valley and made the hilltop brown. Lights leaped out of the darkness afar

off; a railway train shrieked in the distance—and when morning came I sat there, wet with the dew. A man driving a cow loitered near and I asked if he could direct me to Major White's place, and he pointed to a turnpike, running to the left of my road—my fateful road—and told me to stop at the second house beyond the creek. I didn't inquire as to the distance; I didn't care. All I wanted was some sort of object in my mind's view, it made but little difference how far off it might be. I halted at a wayside place and ordered breakfast, but when it came upon the table I sickened at the sight of it and hastened from the house. A friendly old man in a carry-all offered to take me up with him, but I told him that I hadn't far to go. He asked how far, and when I told him he laughed and remarked that I must be fond of walking. But I found a sort of mad relief in physical exertion and was thankful that the road was not shorter. And why did I wish to trudge out to Major White's place? To see that faded woman, that bloodless thing, that phantom. I wanted to demand of her the

secret of her influence over Zaleme. Ha, I repeated her name, over and over, Zaleme, Zaleme; and it sounded further and further away. Did her father grasp my hand at the gate, grip it hard, and say something in a wavering voice? Was Stephen himself serious as I walked forth from the house? I could not tell. I had visions, and as some of them were absurd, I was afraid to let any of them serve as a memory. And I was going to demand of that girl why her brother, the editor, hushed up so suddenly after speaking of the fact that Zaleme had been engaged. I crossed the creek, passed the first house, and there was White's place, with a hedge of cedars in the front yard, a white house so neatly painted and clean that I was afraid of it; and I walked past and halted further down the road and stood looking over a fence where a man was feeding sheep. I inquired if he knew whether Major White were at home, and he answered that he was the man. I could have knocked him down for saying it; and thus made bold by anger I told him that I wished to

see his daughter. It was blunt, but did not displease him. I introduced myself, we shook hands and he went with me to the house. This would have been well enough had he stopped there, but he didn't; he wanted to be cordial and he heaped annoying attentions upon me—introduced me to his wife and a neighbor woman. But why did not Rhoda come? I knew that she was at home; I had heard her singing and I had seen her flit up the stairway like a ghost. She came at the end of long waiting; she was so pleased to welcome me to her home. How thoughtful it was of me, but Texans were famous for their chivalry. How well I was looking. Kentucky surely agreed with me.

“Did you come over from Mr. Acklin's? Why didn't Zaleme come with you?”

“I walked directly from town,” I answered.

“Walked!” she cried. “You don't mean to say you walked all that distance?”

“Yes, but I am not yet tired. Will you walk out with me? I have something to ask you.”

We went out into a grove of black walnut, and I remembered that I had not asked pardon for my abruptness in taking leave of White and the two women. I spoke to Rhoda about it and she declared that I had "introduced them to a perfect model of leave-taking." And now I had nothing to do but to enforce my demand. "I hope you will not think ill of me, Miss White——"

"Oh, not at all. I shall always welcome you at any time."

"I mean that you will not think ill of me for my great concern regarding—I don't know how to say it, but I want to know something of Miss Acklin's engagement."

"I would prefer not to discuss it, Mr. Howardson."

"But why? that's the question. I have a right to know."

"Then why doesn't she tell you?"

"She will—after a while, but I want to know now."

"It is not so profound a secret, Mr. Howard-

son, but I don't care to talk about it. It's painful to me."

"To you! Think of me. I beg your pardon, I don't mean to be so selfish. But I must know. Is she ashamed of it? Was the fellow so far beneath her as to——"

"Mr. Howardson, she was engaged to my brother. If you wish to know anything further you must ask her."

I left her there in the walnut grove, and following directions caught up from a man whom I met in the road, I struck out toward Mr. Acklin's house. Her brother! Could she mean the one whom I had met? Suddenly I halted. What had Zaleme meant when she asked if I would send her soul to torment? And then I saw that diminutive monument, white in the green grass; and it rose before me till I could not see the top of it, but always in view was the Alamo, chiseled near the base, and I gazed till it turned red, as if with the blood of hero martyrs, and then—black, as upon it fell the shadow of my heart. In the midst of a thick wood I came to a creek, blue and deep, with no ford,

no bridge in sight. I took off my clothes, tied them into a bundle and swam across, and the cold water refreshed me and reminded me that I had eaten nothing that day. At a negro cabin I ate a bit of bacon and drank buttermilk from a gourd and then pushed onward, and coming suddenly upon a turnpike I looked toward the right, and there, not far off, was a bridge, and yes, the red gables of Zaleme's home. But this time no tremor seized me, for my blood was strong. Visions of what had taken place when I left the house began to arise before me, but I did not falter in my determination to see her and force her to explain the cause of that diminutive grave beneath the apple tree. I did not dare to speculate, but the desire to see the grave now, even before seeing her, arose in my mind and was my master. Crossing the bridge, crouching like a thief, I stole up the creek and entered the orchard, and though I had not marked the spot where the monument stood, yet my heart led me to it. Dropping upon my knees I gazed at the Alamo and it seemed to be turning red. But what were those letters

cut in the rock? "A voice from the dead was hushed," the chisel said, and I tore away the grass and studied the accursed sentence. On the grave a moss rose grew, and I clutched at it to tear it up by the roots, but a voice arrested my hand. Was Zaleme calling me? I listened, gazing toward the house, but there came no other sound; yes, a voice, as if some one taking leave, was talking back. I stood up, and across a corner of the orchard and over the yard fence I gazed and saw Rhoda White on a horse trotting off toward the bridge. Ah, she had come to forestall me, to strengthen Zaleme against me, to instill more of her poison. There was suddenly a slight darkening of everything, and I was startled, but looking round I saw that the sun's lower rim had sunk behind a hilltop, far away. The latch of the gate clicked and my heart leaped, as a mad man might leap in the dark; and now I began to tremble and to feel that I must run away, down among the shadows of the creek, for I saw Zaleme coming toward me, walking dreamily, her eyes cast downward. And she did not come directly in a straight

line, but wandered to the right and to the left. Ah, she was pursuing the course over which she and I had strolled while she dreamed, I holding her hand. And she awoke the same way, with a start at the grave. "Oh," she cried; and in the twilight of the apple tree we stood with heads hung low, silent. I was almost smothering and could not speak. She pointed and I sat down upon the sward, leaning back against the tree, and she sat down near by, her hands listless in her lap.

"Rhoda told me you were coming."

"I saw her ride away just now."

"She is very much concerned about you, Mr. Howardson."

"She is more concerned about you, I think. She told me that you were engaged to her brother. The one I met in town?"

"No. The one whose last message to me is hushed here," she said, pointing to the grave. I arose, I could sit no longer, and she stood, too, and I thought I saw that glorifying light coming upon her, but it was only a last gleam of the dying sun. "I wanted you to sit down

so you would be quieter," she said. "I had made up my mind to tell you something."

"Tell it, but let me hear it as I am. What do you mean by this?" and I pointed to the words cut in the rock.

"I am going to tell you. But you must give me time and let me tell it in my own way. Will you let me sit down? I can tell it better."

"You can tell it well enough to break my heart. But please sit down."

She sat down and pulled at the grass and sighed, for she looked tired.

"Calvin White," she said, and pulled at the grass.

"Was that his name?"

"Yes. He was three years older than I and had known me always."

"And is he or a *part* of him buried here?"

"A part of his soul—yes. If you let me I will tell you. He loved me—oh, I know he did—loved me when he was but a child and was my sweetheart, and on our way to school we planned the home we were going to build. How graceful he was as he grew older, and at

school he took the prize for oratory. And he would sit for hours telling me of his love. He studied law, but he did not practice. His mind took a commercial turn and he went into business, but he failed, and then he began to travel for a farm implement house in St. Louis. From time to time he was advanced till——”

“I beg your pardon, but what about the Alamo? What made it your shrine and why is it engraved here on this marble?”

“I said you must let me tell it in my own way. He was advanced from time to time till he was given nearly all the Southern territory. Three years ago we met for the last time. I was in San Antonio, on a visit to my brother. I had never seen Calvin so nervous and anxious. And for the first time he began to doubt my love for him. He declared that I was not sad enough when away from him. And he brooded over it. One night he asked me to go to the Alamo with him. ‘Why at night?’ I asked. ‘Because,’ he replied, ‘I want you to take a vow with me.’ The Alamo was not kept open at night, but he borrowed the key and we entered

the chamber where Bowie died. It was late. I was nervous and I said to him: 'Calvin, why did you bring me here at such a time. Let us go, please.' 'Wait, sweetheart,' he replied, and he put his lantern on the floor. I can see its red light now. Oh, it seems to be on the little grave!"

"It is not the light of his lantern that makes the grave red," I cried. "It grew red under my gaze, with the blood that rushed across my vision; but soon it will be black with the shadow of my heart."

"Oh, don't talk that way. If you would only be reasonable."

"But what is buried here? Tell me."

"He put his lantern on the ground and said to me: 'I want you to take an oath. You believe in the soul, and so do I. You believe that the soul can suffer throughout eternity, and so do I. And now in this corner I will draw a cross. See, I draw it with my finger. That makes it imperishable in the mind in the years to come, whenever we look into this corner we shall see the cross. You might destroy the wall

but the cross would remain.' His words scared me. I thought something terrible must be coming. 'Now,' he said, taking my hand, 'kneel with me and repeat after me.' Oh, what an oath it was, and as I gazed the cross was red as if with blood. The oath—that I was to give my soul to eternal punishment if I ever married other than him—an oath by the love of mother, father, Christ, God! It was terrible, and he gripped my hand and trembled as I followed him. As a general thing a vow may not amount to much, but this was awful and I felt that not to save my life could I break faith with him; and there was something sweet in it all, even though he trembled and the cross stood red in my sight. I was more than ever convinced that he loved me—loved me as I wanted to be loved—knew that he would kill himself if I did not love him. And that is why the Alamo is my shrine."

It was growing dark. I could not see the expression of her face as she looked up. I dropped beside her on my knees. "Go on," I said. "Why this grave?"

"I came home, and in a letter not long afterward he said: 'I am going back to San Antonio the day after tomorrow and the next letter you receive from me will be written in the Alamo, by the light of a lantern, at the foot of the cross, twelve o'clock at night.' The midnight letter was written on the tenth of the month and was put into the letter box immediately afterward I know. But it did not reach me till two days had passed and then——"

"Well, and then?"

"I did not open it—I buried it here. I did not open it, for within a few hours after writing it he was instantly killed in a railroad accident—and I could not read his words—words from the dead. So I put the letter in a silver box and buried it here. To some persons this may be absurd, but—but I could not have helped doing it. You have a temperament that you can't explain, perhaps, and——"

"And you don't know what was in the letter?"

"I told you that I did not read it—that I couldn't bear to read a letter from the dead."

"But you *must* read it."

"I will not."

"Then, like a jackal, I will dig it up. I will shout its contents under your window at night. I——"

"Please don't say that. Don't you know that I am——"

"No, I don't know what you are. Yes, I do. You are the bride of a fallacy. You are the wife of a memory, an oath; and a priestess, a phantom, a ghost, a moonbeam upon a sunken grave—a woman named White holds you, has tied you with an undertaker's lowering lines." She sprang to her feet and the grass which she had pulled up she scattered upon me. "A finger mark on a wall—a nothing——" God, I saw it before me in the air, and I shut my eyes, but I saw it still, the mark of a finger dipped in blood. I turned to her and the cross was between us. "You say that I have a temperament that I may not be able to explain. Yes, but I did not have it until you gave it to me. No human being ever fought another as hard as I fought you, but it was useless and I fell. I

had been ambitious and my ambition was within my reach till I knew you, and then you blighted my mind to all else except yourself. Could you imagine a man kept from water till he was famishing of thirst? Could you imagine a child, gaunt-eyed with hunger? Could you imagine an old man smothering to death? Then you may catch a glimpse of my heart."

"You must go," she said. "Go back to your home and wait and wait and, but one of these days you may hear from me. Don't come here again. Go and wait." I put out my hands but she fled from me and I stood there alone.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LOOKED AGAIN UPON HER HOME.

Exhaustion forced me to sleep and a bloody finger traced a red mark through my slumber. The southbound train was to leave at 6:30 the next morning and I left a call at the hotel office, though I did not need to, as I was awake in time. "Go and wait," was in my ears constantly and knocked at the door of my heart to drag a hope therein; but a famishing thirst is not appeased with one drop of water. A gleam of reason began to light up my mind, so long dark; and I seemed to look into corners where there was mold, chilling dampness. I went to the station, bought a ticket, sat down, got up on a sudden, walked rapidly away, faster and faster, almost running; and from a hilltop I looked upon her home. I had no thought of

going to the grave; once it held a horror for me, but now it was full of words. But those words, how they held her though she had never seen them and was not acquainted with their meaning. Perhaps it were better that they should not be dug up. Written in the oath-corner, beneath the wall on which the cross had been traced, they might seize upon her mind and hold it with a tighter grip.

I let the gate slam to attract attention, but no one came or looked out upon me. I knocked at the door and an empty echo was the only answer. Surely not every one was gone; it was still so early; and I sat down in a rocking-chair. Presently a negro woman came round the house and seeing me remarked by way of apology that she thought some one must have been knocking at the door. I asked for Zaleme, and was informed that Mr. Acklin and his wife had just gone over to a neighbor that wasn't very well. I asked a second time for Zaleme and was told that she must be walking about the place somewhere. It was at least encouraging to know that she had not vanished from the

face of the earth; and what was that my treacherous inner self was saying? "Listen and you may hear her singing in the garden." And I did listen but heard no song. It may not have been more than a minute, but it seemed that a long time had passed when Zaleme came round the corner of the house. She did not see me; she went to the gate and stood looking toward town. I got up and stood under the vine that hung above the steps leading to the veranda. "Zaleme," I spoke softly, and she looked upward. "Zaleme!" I spoke louder, and she turned toward me, and she was not startled, but came walking toward me as if in a dream, as she had walked when I held her hand. I reached forth my hand as she approached and then she seemed to awake and she drew back. But she came up the steps and sat down, putting her hair back from her eyes. How pale she was, and she looked so tired. Surely that moth, that funereal thing, that bloodless woman, had bewitched her.

"Zaleme, I tried to go away, but I couldn't."

"You must. I can't—can't stand—every-

thing. You have begged me to love you. Would you marry a woman who did not love you?"

"Yes, if I loved her as—as woefully as I love you—in the hope that I might learn to hate her; and then in the soreness of a revengeful heart I would laugh in her face and run away."

That strange starlight came to her eyes, and for a time she sat as if in wondering silence, perfectly still, gazing into my eyes; and then she said, with her hands clasped over her breast: "Oh, you make my heart weep." And at that moment I thought that I should die, with the blinding leap of my blood, and I must have staggered as I moved toward her, with my arms spread wide apart. But when my eyes cleared I saw that her countenance had changed. She no longer seemed entranced with the knowledge that I loved her; the pallor of fear overspread her face, and the starlight was gone from her eyes. Was the current of her soul like the changeable channel of a treacherous stream?

"Zaleme," I said, steadying myself, "you are

the only woman I ever struggled to understand, and you are the strangest of all women. At one moment you are warm with the thought of my love and then cold with your own fear. Why be so unnatural? Let us be reasonable, won't you?"

How bitter can become the sweet expression of a beautiful mouth. "Oh, and do *you* speak of reason?"

"Yes, but I realize that I have no right to. I know that I am the most unreasonable of all men. And even my Creator may not know it so well as you do."

"Mr. Howardson, if you don't show more reverence you must not talk to me."

"I beg your pardon," and then after a pause I added: "You will no doubt grant me the privilege of calling myself a fool; and God may hate a coward but he pardons a fool. And as I am already pardoned above, may I hope to be forgiven here below?"

She laughed, almost cruelly, I felt; but there was a softness in her eyes. "Sometimes you remind me of a schoolboy," she said.

"Ah, and what is more real than a schoolboy's trouble—a schoolboy's love?"

"But does a schoolboy's love last?" she said, and even before I spoke again I saw a pallor overspreading her face.

"Does it?" I cried. "Does it live to be buried alive under an apple tree?"

I thought she frowned at me as she said: "How it pleases you to take an advantage of me. It seems you would be delighted to know that no one had ever been true—except yourself."

"Ah, you know I am true. As for others—another, you can simply surmise."

Her eyes snapped. Never had she seemed such a stranger to my heart. She was so new to me that I could not assimilate her, and I looked at her, feeling that there was amazement in my eyes, and there must have been, for with a cool smile she said: "You look as if you had just met me for the first time and were astonished at something strange about me."

"I feel that way. But why should we talk to each other in this manner? I reveal myself,

for I cannot conceal my heart; but you hide yourself from me."

She shook her head. "I have nothing to hide."

"You have. You hide the words of a man. You are afraid of them. You have buried them in the dark earth and you are afraid to see them wither and turn to nothing in the light of the sun. Come, we will dig up the letter. We will take it to the Alamo and at midnight we will read it by the light of a lantern. Come, I dare you."

She was coming back toward my heart, nearer and nearer, and I trembled. "You dare. Let us enter into a contract. I will dig up the letter and read it. If it is full of the same old love you are to go away and ——"

"No!" I cried, "I will not enter into such a contract."

"Then *you* are afraid of the letter."

"Yes, I acknowledge I am afraid of it. I love you so much that I am afraid to look with you upon a past that is yours but not mine. You said that you would want a man to love you so

desperately that he would kill himself if he believed you did not love him. I am that man, Zaleme. If you do not—cannot love me, I will kill myself. Do you think I would continue to fight as I have fought? Don't you know I would say to God: 'Here is a soul that you have seen tortured. Take it and give it relief by sending it to hell!'

"Oh, Mr. Howardson—Lucian—don't talk that way. Yes, say it again, and God forgive me for listening and finding it sweet to my heart. No—you must not touch me—no, not now. Lucian, I am so slow to change that when I do, I must have received a new nature—and time must pass before I can become accustomed to myself. But—but I do believe I have been born again. No, not yet. Please don't misunderstand me. Oh, you don't know how steadfast I am. Who knows what may come? Lucian, will you do my bidding? Yes, you will. Then go back and re-enter the fight into which your ambition leads you—and win. Won't you—for me?"

"Yes," I said, not tremulous now, but as

strong as oak. "I will go back and win the fight—for you. But before I say good-bye, will you walk with me, once more, in the orchard?"

She gave me an earnest look. "You want to go to the monument, and it will distress you."

"No, not to the monument, but only in that direction."

Did she understand that I hungered for that dreamy walk, holding her hand as I held it, leading her when first we went to the grave? Yes, she understood for she gave me her hand and I led her forth, through the gate, into the orchard; but she did not dream as she had dreamed before; she was self-conscious—she halted, looked at me and said: "The dream won't come."

"It is because we know that the grave is over there."

"No, that is not the reason, for it came once after we had gone together to the grave. No, it is useless. Oh," she cried, grasping my arm, "there is the red cross in the sky. Don't you see it?"

I shut my eyes, but I saw it, red, traced upon a white cloud as if by the bloody finger of a giant. "We are both insane, Zaleme," I said, looking at her.

"Let us go back," she replied; and we turned about.

"You said you would go and win the fight. When will you start?"

"I will leave on the night train. Is that soon enough?"

"Yes, too soon if I were to consult——" she hesitated.

"Zaleme, why are you so afraid you might say something to encourage me? Is it that you would always keep my heart dark and heavy? Won't you lighten it with a promise—that you will write to me?"

"Yes, I will answer your letters."

"And you will write with more freedom than you have talked?"

"I have told you the truth and I couldn't be freer than that. Do you want me——"

"I want you to say that my love is not thrown away—I want you to say that you love me."

“You don’t want me to say it unless——” she hesitated and looked up at me with a smile. “I told you that when I change I must have received a new nature—and if I have received one, I must have time to comprehend it.”

We were now at the gate. The thorn of a rose bush caught her hand and pricked it. “Good-bye,” I said, and seizing her hand I kissed the wound—and I went away with her blood on my lips.

CHAPTER XXIV.

STEPHEN SHEDS LIGHT.

Just as I reached the outskirts of the town Mr. Acklin, in his buggy, overtook me. He drew up, calling out that he had something of a serious nature to impart to me, and my blood leaped and my heart quickened as I stepped into the buggy and sat down beside him. And then we drove along in silence. Was he going to speak? Had he forgotten the something of serious nature? It may not have been but a few moments, but it seemed that a long time had passed when he said:

“Mr. Howardson, if I had known the state of your mind I would not have taken such a liberty with you—and I regret the many quiet laughs I have had at your expense.”

“Mr. Acklin, please speak plainer. I don’t understand you.”

"That is exactly what I am going to do, Mr. Howardson. You have no doubt discovered that I am not a commonplace man; in fact, you must have seen that we are not a commonplace family. A peculiar humor is a trait among us. When you first came to my house—not knowing the state of your mind, as I before remarked—I pretended to discover or to understand that you were an adherent of my belief—vegetarianism; and having sworn my family to the secrecy of the joke, I settled down to a sly enjoyment of it, just as for years I have enjoyed Editor White—but I charge you not to say a word about it to him. But the state of your mind—I might say heart—has been revealed to me, Mr. Howardson, and I now beg your pardon."

"Mr. Acklin, I hope you haven't driven after me to speak of a thing so trivial."

"It is not trivial to me, Mr. Howardson, knowing as I do the state of your mind."

"Well, sir," I cried, "what have you to say concerning it?"

"Not so loud, my dear sir. What have I to

say? Why, I appreciate your condition. I cannot say that I have been situated exactly as you are, having become the master of my temperament at quite an early age, that is in an emotional way; but my mastery of diet did not come until a period much later. But now, sir, coming straight to the point of the question at issue, I am sorry that a previous—well, entanglement, should in any way blind my daughter to——”

I grasped his hand and pulled it so hard in my effort to draw it toward me that the horse turned aside and halted with his forefeet in the gutter.

“Gently,” said Mr. Acklin. “And now,” he added, “having said all I intended to say by inference if not directly in words, I think I will bid you good-bye here and return home. It is only a short distance to your hotel.”

I got out and shook hands with him, and loath to loosen my grasp I retained my hold, eager, struggling to utter words that would not come to me. In the ardor of my gratitude I thanked him for his kindness during the long

period of our acquaintance, and remembering that I had known him but a short time, I took it all back and started off anew, only to fall into other embarrassments. And how patient he was, with a sad smile on his face, kindly waiting; but how rough to me was even the gentlest parting, for in him I saw a strong encouragement, and to see him driving away was to look upon a new-born hope going from me, to sink out of sight beyond the hill. I strove to make him understand that without Zaleme there would be no light for me, that life, if indeed it should endure, would be but a smothering darkness.

"Mr. Howardson," he said, and his face grew brighter, "let us both hope. If she has told you to do something, no matter what it may be, do it and—wait. That is all I can say—with regard to her, but as to myself in relation to you I could say much more if it were necessary, but it is not, for you understand. Good-bye."

He turned the horse about, waved his hand at me and drove away, and I looked after him

until a hilltop arose between us. The tavern bells were ringing the noon hour. I passed the court room of a magistrate, and saw a jury filing out to dinner. Editor White followed with a piece of paper (notes for his newspaper) fluttering in his hand. He saluted me, looking sharply at me, and taking my arm walked with me down the street, talking of the case on trial, but thinking of something else, I fancied—of Zaleme.

"You have just come in from Mr. Acklin's, haven't you?"

"Yes, and have just left Mr. Acklin."

"Did he say anything about my brother Calvin?"

"No, why should he say anything?"

"Oh, he might have his reasons."

"Great Caesar!" I exclaimed irritably, "his daughter is not engaged to your brother's ghost."

"Not in the least—certainly not."

For a time we walked on in silence, turned toward his office and halted near his place of daily toil. "Won't you come in?" he asked,

appearing to have something on his mind. But I did not care to hear of his brother, and I said, "No, I thank you." I gave him an opportunity to go, stepping back for that purpose, but he stood still.

"Wait a moment," he said. "Has Stephen told you anything about my brother?"

"I beg your pardon," said I, "but is your brother on every man's mind?"

"Oh, as to that, not so much on any man's mind as he seems to be on yours."

I could have struck him. His insulting smile invited a blow; hot blood flew to the ends of my fingers, shutting them up into a fist. He stepped back, and in a tone of unctuous apology declared that he meant no harm, and that he wished to recall his offensive words. I was as willing to pardon him as I was to strike, and I told him so, at the same time offering my hand in proof that I held no malice. I was now more than willing to leave him, but he detained me, not with holding my hand or with words, but by manner, an atmosphere that pleaded with me to stay; and I waited, looking at him.

"Mr. Howardson," said he, "you will please pardon me if I speak of my brother, won't you?"

"Yes, speak out."

He seemed embarrassed. "I have really nothing to say, myself. In fact, I am troubled by the thought of what some one else may say. Will you do me this favor: If any one—if Stephen begins to tell you about my brother will you please inform him that you do not care to hear it? I know that is a singular request, but will you make me that promise?"

"Mr. White, I don't see why I should make such a promise. The fact is, I should like to hear anything of your brother that Stephen might say. But I am going away today and I may not see him again."

"Are you going around to his stable?"

"Well, I may not."

"Would you mind promising me that you will not?"

"Why should I make you any promises at all? No, I won't promise. I don't understand

why you and your sister should wish to maintain such an influence over Miss Acklin. I——”

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Howardson, we do not wish to maintain an influence over her. But we were fond of our brother and we honor the sacred relationship that existed between——”

“I have heard enough of that, sir. If she were your brother’s widow you could scarcely manifest so deep an interest in her. Are you willing that I should now bid you good-bye?”

He bowed and turned about, and I went straightway to the stable to see Stephen. The day was broiling hot, and I found him sitting on his bench, with collar unbuttoned and rolled back, exposing his hairy chest. He did not laugh as I expected he would; he arose, shook hands with me and sat down without saying a word. A chair was near by, and drawing it forward I sat down beside him and waited for him to say something. After a time he dropped his heavy hand upon my knee and said: “I am your friend.” Was it his great voice that shook me so? That he might not

see my weakness I turned my eyes away, looking at misty objects down the street.

"And when I say I'm a man's friend, I mean it. You understand me."

"Yes, and I thank you."

"That's all right. I went over to see Tommy White this morning and I told him I didn't think it was fair for me to keep silent any longer on a certain subject."

"Concerning his brother?" I eagerly inquired.

"Exactly. How did you know?"

"I met Mr. White a few minutes ago and he requested me to promise him that I would not permit you to tell me anything about his brother."

"Yes, I understand. But I'm going to tell you, because I believe it is my duty. Something occurred once and I promised White that I would never tell Zaleme, but I couldn't read the future and therefore I didn't promise not to tell you. About two weeks before Calvin White started out on his last trip, he forged my name and got a thousand dollars out of the

bank. He thought I was a good, easy, drinking sort of a fellow, and would never discover the crime; but I did, and in mighty short order. Well, I went to Tommy and told him to send for his brother. We were in the Side-Board at the time. He did so, and when Cal came I opened the false check and spread it out on the table. 'You didn't reckon I'd get this so soon' said I, 'but the cashier of the bank became a little suspicious of the signature after the money was paid.' Cal turned as pale as salt and Tommy wanted to know what was the matter. 'Nothing at all, Tommy,' said I, 'nothing only your brother has forged my name for a thousand dollars.' Cal put his head on the table and blubbered and Tommy got up and walked about the room with his hands behind him; and after a while he came up to me and said: 'Stephen, are you going to see an old family ruined?' and then it was my time and I said: 'Tommy, am I going to see my brother's daughter marry a thief?' Tommy staggered back, and Cal groaned. I didn't have it in my heart to turn him over to the law,

especially when he got down on his knees and begged me so hard. They said they would make the money good. Just then we heard someone coming down the alley, and we all hushed up, just as the cashier of the bank stepped up into the door. Cal looked like a ghost, for he and the cashier were enemies. 'Mr. Acklin,' said the cashier, making no bones about it, 'what about that check? You told our young man that you'd let us know.' 'Oh, this check?' said I, winking at Cal to keep quiet. 'Why, it is as good as gold.' 'I know all about that,' said he, 'but is it straight?' 'As any string,' I swore, and asked him to sit down and have something, but he frowned and said, 'No, thank you, I never drink.' And out he walked. Well, sir, I always liked the White boys, and they begged me so hard that I not only swore that I wouldn't tell my brother, but swore I wouldn't say a word to my niece. I had faith in his repentance, but I was sorry of my oath as far as Zaleme was concerned, and I 'lowed to myself that I would tell her about the time I saw them making preparations for

the wedding. But it wasn't to be, for he got killed soon afterwards and that ended it, in a manner. But I told Tommy that you ought to know it, ought under the circumstances to tell Zaleme, and he begged me not to tell you, but I want to say that I'm not as soft as I used to be. I find the world hard, and from this time on I am going to act accordingly. Of course no effort has ever been made to pay back the thousand. I could take White's printing office, but the party is in need of a paper and he knows more about fixing up campaign lies than I do."

He leaned back and bellowed. He laughed until everything near us seemed to shake, and wiping his eyes with a red silk handkerchief, big enough for a weather signal, he remarked that he must be the damnedest fool on the earth. "But are you going to tell Zaleme?" he asked, and our eyes met.

"No. I don't care to take that kind of an advantage."

He gripped my shoulder. "That's it, be sportsmanlike. It will all come right, I think.

But no one can tell anything about that woman. I have studied her ever since she was a child but I'll be blamed if I can get at her. I found out something the other day, and it weakened me a little with Tommy and his sister. Zaleme has a farm up the creek—left her by her aunt—and took up the notion of selling it to build a big monument to Cal, over on old Major White's place, and Tommy and Rhoda, as the active managers of the scheme, would get a good slice out of the investment money—more than half, I bet you. And that is the reason they want to keep their influence over her."

It was all clear enough now, and my blood arose against Editor White. I told Stephen that I should like to thrash the scoundrel.

"Oh, no, don't hurt him. Tommy's a first rate hand to spend an evening with; and he's got a pretty fair voice, too—not strong, but a good deal of music in it first and last."

I left him laughing on his bench—I looked back and saw him shaking. And now the long and eventless afternoon was before me. In my room I wrote a letter to Zaleme, but upon

reading it and finding that I had really said nothing, tore it to pieces. Later I wrote another letter, intending to make it more moderate in tone, but discovering it to be more vehement, I tore that, also, and was about to go out when a boy announced that Miss White wished to see me in the parlor. She was the same bloodless creature.

She gave me her cool strip of a hand and sat down with a sigh, and her breath seemed to chill the room, as if on a winter's day some one had raised a window.

"I was so afraid that I might miss you."

"My train doesn't leave until after ten o'clock tonight."

"Yes, but you know you men are so hard to find. And I didn't know but you might be off somewhere with Mr. Stephen. Isn't he genial—isn't he communicative? And I suppose you were with him. But not in that place called the Side-Board, I hope. Really, now, were you there—and it is there, I'm told, that he is the most genial—most communicative. Were you there?"

"No, I went to see him at his stable."

"And I suppose that as usual, he had a crowd about him. Were there really many present?"

"He was alone when I found him and alone when I left him."

"Oh, indeed!" she said, spreading her fan. "One of his very quiet days. They are rare, he has so many friends. My brother Calvin was deeply attached to him: Did he tell you so? Did he say anything at all about him?"

"What is it you wish to know, Miss White? But I can perhaps save you the trouble of further questions when I tell you that the monument is not likely to be raised."

She could not turn paler, and she blushed; and with no word, not even a parting glance, she shut up her fan and walked out, and in my restless sleep that night, on the train, I saw her white face, and above her head hung a cross as red as blood.

CHAPTER XXV.

OLD SAM PRESENTS A BUNDLE.

Once more to breathe the broad air of Texas, to feel the inspiration of her freedom and her vastness! Nurtured upon that land who would not willingly give his life to maintain his country's honor? Ah, bountiful domain, majestic spread of earth, how deep a love hast thou made thy sons and daughters feel for thee!

It was early morning when I arrived at Rip-lar, the end of a journey through a hot night, a blazing day, and out of the edge of another darkness; and I walked about the old town in the yellow lights of lamps burning low, waiting for sunrise and old Sam Hall. And they came as if by prearrangement, Sam walking down the street with the sun, from a hilltop, streaming after him. He took my hand and looked

into my eyes, probed me, shook his head with satisfaction, and said: "Lucian, you are true—you don't change." I did not attempt to tell him anything; he asked no questions; he took my arm and we walked about talking lightly until the town began to stir, when our conversation was intercepted by men who halted to shake hands and to bid me welcome. Old man Carson was among the number. He had come in early, he said, to buy some turnip seed. His shirt sleeves were still rolled high upon his hairy arm and in his old eye a mischief shone, like the sudden gleaming of a live coal in ashes long since dead. He drew me aside and asked if I had brought his niece back with me, and giving me a dig in the side with his thumb, he showed his yellow teeth and laughed. "If you ain't ready I reckon you will be in time," he said. "Didn't take me long to see how the land lay."

Was it impossible to keep my heart concealed from an eye so dull? "My sister wrote that you were there on important business," he went on, with another laugh. "But I haven't

said anything about it and there's no harm done. Well, come out and stay all night with me."

"Sam," said I, when the old man had passed on, "do I wear my heart on my sleeve?"

"You carry it in your hand, Lucian, and your hand is open."

At breakfast I spoke of the campaign and the probable effect of my temporary withdrawal from the fight. Sam looked serious. "Then I am as good as defeated," said I, laughing; and he replied: "No, you are as good as elected. Everybody concedes it."

"Then why did you look so serious?"

"Over a duty you are compelled to perform."

"It must be of a grave nature."

"It may be, indeed."

"What is it?"

"I will tell you when we go to the office. I have a bundle for you."

"A bundle?"

"Yes, a present—one that you can use."

I did not ask another question; under his watchful eye there was on my part no show of

curiosity and I felt that applause was added to his deep friendship for me. We met a number of persons after breakfast and did not go straightway to the office. I did not speak of it but Sam did.

"There's time enough," said he. "The train does not leave here till noon."

With the serious duty I had to perform, the bundle which could be made useful and the train which did not leave till noon he had built up a mystery, but I walked about with him and was not impatient. My mind was on a bridge, with three stone arches, looking up toward a red brick house, and the shrubbery in the garden stood above the fence, and a breeze just strong enough to make a murmur among the leaves of an old hickory tree, floated a perfume from a vine in the yard. That eye of the mind, how clear! And even when age has come it does not need a lens to magnify, for it gazes upon objects dear, and bright with everlasting love. I could see her father, with his big black books piled up before him upon a chair; and now for the first time I could

see him laugh over the great joke he had played upon me. I saw her walking dreamily in the orchard, as if she were led along; she shrank back, and I saw a little monument under the apple tree and—and there was a snake coiled about it, black, and with evil glitter in its eye.

“Read that,” said Sam. We were in the office, and he had spread a newspaper upon the table; and I read the words: “Lucian Howardson may re-enter the race again but it is doubtful. He is at present undergoing treatment in a sanitarium for drunkenness.”

“Ah, and the bundle—the present,” said I, and Sam placed a package before me. I took it up, unrolled it; and a horsewhip fell upon the table, a whip, black, like the serpent coiled about the monument. “This paper, as you see,” said Sam, “is published in Doyland, thirty-five miles from here—and a train leaves at noon.”

We were on the train, speeding across a country growing brown in the fierce heat of a summer sun, and Sam was talking of the man who had committed the offense against me. His name was Harrison Redmon, brother of Dand-

ridge Redmon, a campaign orator, a man who had killed two gamblers one night in San Antonio. We would give him a good subject for an oration, much better than his brother's scandalous newspaper had furnished.

At the door of the editor's office I unwrapped my blacksnake whip and held it behind me. Sam opened the door and I followed him into a room. A man with a wrench was tightening the bolts of a job press and he looked up at us. Sam asked if Mr. Redmon were in and the man nodded towards a door. "You'd better come in with us," said Sam. "He might need you." The man followed with the wrench in his hand. In another room a large man, with a red face, sat behind a table. He started to get up, but I commanded him not to move, and he sat back in his chair and was still, gazing at me.

"I suppose you know who I am?"

A yellow wave rolled across his red face. He said that he knew me and began to beg. Just then Sam cried, "Look out," and the wrench whirred past my head, and went

through a window; and the next moment there was a bright gleam, a blow, and the wrench flinger was on the floor, clubbed to sleep by Sam's pistol. The big man was on his feet, and I wrapped my whip about his shoulders; his shirt stuck to his back and I saw the red oozing through. He snatched at a drawer, and I knocked him down with the butt end of the whip.

The next day there was a trial before a magistrate, and our enemies appeared against us, with bandages about their heads. The magistrate, one of my supporters, imposed a light fine, and as I went out the crowd of idlers pressed forward to shake hands with me. Redmon came up. "You think you've got out of it pretty easy, don't you? Well let me say you haven't. You'll hear from my brother Dandridge."

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHAT HE CALLED MY GRACEFUL WORK.

With so much vigor did I re-enter the campaign that an old man, meeting me, declared that he had never known rest to do a person so much good. Rest! It was her command that had made me strong.

In Texas, the horsewhipping of a liar and a scoundrel serves one as a sort of moral rejuvenation, as a revival in the fall of the year serves to reinforce an old-time Methodist's religion. The press was full of the affair, and it was only our most shameless enemies that condemned the act as cowardly. Old Sam traveled with me, as proud a man as ever I have seen, not only the manager of my campaign but my protector as well. He looked years younger, and there was a sort of music

in his laugh, like the uncertain notes of an accordion long since out of use. And during nearly a week he had forgotten to refer to his dead heart; but one day he halted and pointing to a heap of black ashes where trash had been burnt in front of a store, said to me: "It is just like that, Lucian—dead, always black and never shows signs of growing brighter." But the next moment he was humming a tune, doubtless with his mind upon Dandridge Redmon. The honey that Samson found in the carcass of the lion was not sweeter to that mighty man than the threat of danger, coming out of our recent adventure, was to my friend. But why didn't I hear from the scoundrel's brother?

Haney met us at the hotel, and in my room he talked blithely of our certain success. Sam fell asleep on a lounge. Haney went out and Sam opened his eyes. "That fellow can put me to sleep any time," said he. "And I'll tell you what, he will dictate the distribution of your political favors. I know him."

The bell boy brought in a card, bearing the

name of John Weatherby; and when I read out the name old Sam smiled and said that we now were to hear from Dandridge Redmon. And so it proved. Weatherby came in, and, being a "friend," shook hands with us and then straightened himself and pretentiously pulled at his mustache; then he bowed theatrically, presented a communication and coughed from time to time as I was reading it—a document much beyond the conventional length, setting forth grievances like a petition. But finally the point was reached. I was to consent to be shot at or horse-whipped.

"Mr. Weatherby," said I, handing the paper to Sam, "does your friend suppose that I am fool enough to disqualify myself before the voters of this State?"

"Ah, which means that you won't fight. Is that it?"

"Not by a damned sight!" Sam exclaimed, crumpling the paper and throwing it into the fireplace.

"I beg your pardon," said Weatherby, pulling at his mustache and bowing to Sam, "but

if you have breath to spare you'd better expend it in offering thanks that you are not included in this—this reprisal."

"What's that!" Sam cried, starting up; but I put my hand on his shoulder. "You may manage the campaign, Sam," said I, "but you must let me manage this affair."

"You don't seem to put much spirit into the way you take care of it," said our visitor.

"Perhaps I don't transact business to your liking, but I must be permitted to employ my own method."

"Ah, and which means——"

"That you may tell your friend Redmon, the murderer, to go to the devil."

Weatherby began to back toward the door, bowing and pulling at his mustache, and Sam cried out with a laugh: "Oh, if you were to shave the bristles off your lip you couldn't carry a challenge at all, could you? But go on if you are going and don't wear out the man's carpet."

Weatherby shut the door gently but he walked hard as he went down the hall and we

heard him clearing his rough throat on the stairway.

"Well," said Sam, straightening himself upon the lounge, "I reckon that was ante-bellum enough. What are you going to do, Lucian?"

"I was thinking of writing a letter."

"About this affair, I mean. But you have written to her several times since you came home, haven't you?"

"I have written many times but I have sent only one letter."

"And you have not heard from her."

"No, it is hardly time for a letter to reach me, as it would have to be forwarded from Riplar."

"I haven't asked you to tell me anything, we have been so busy, but I wish now—during this lull in our affairs," he said, laughing; "I wish you would tell me of your visit—all about it."

In recalling it all I found a sort of pleasure and I gave it to him in full detail; and when I had led him to the grave beneath the apple tree, he bounded to his feet and cried out: "Stop, Lucian!" But the next moment he

said: "Go on, please." And when I had reached the end, he exclaimed: "Good for that big fellow. I want to meet him—and you must write and tell him that I'm his friend. But as I asked just now, what are you going to do about this present emergency?"

"I am going to let it shape itself."

"That's about the best thing you can do."

He lay down again upon the lounge and as if his mind had been soothed, dropped off to sleep. And soon I was lost in the oblivion of a letter to Zaleme. Sam was still asleep when the letter was done, and he had lost so much of needed rest of late that I went out on tip-toe so as not to disturb him. The clerk downstairs told me that the mail had already been taken to the postoffice. "But if you make haste," said he, "you can catch the train at the depot and give your letter to the postal clerk on the car."

I followed his advice, posted the letter and was returning when, not far from the tavern, a man stepped out from a doorway and stood in front of me. Near by I saw Weatherby—

and then I knew that I was face to face with Dandridge Redmon. It was some time before he spoke—he stood looking hard at me, holding one hand behind him. And then he asked:

“Are you armed?”

“I am not.”

Instantly the lash of a wagoner's whip flew high in the air. I threw up my hand, caught the whip midway of the lash, jerked it out of his hand, swung it about—and at a moment when he had snatched out a pistol, I knocked him down, stamped upon his wrist, kicked the pistol into the gutter—and reversing the whip, I lashed him almost raw—knocked him down again and again as he attempted to get up—lashed him till his tongue lolled out. And in the crowd that had gathered stood a man with a smile on his face, with one hand in his pocket and with a finger of the other hand pointing into the face of Weatherby—old Sam. He scolded me for having sneaked off from him, but he was delighted with what he termed my graceful work. “But where,” said he, “did

you acquire such dexterity? How did you manage to catch the lash of that whip?"

"It was purely an accident, Sam. I couldn't do it again in a year."

"That's all right, but it will pass for skill; and," he added when we were at the door of the tavern, "it will surely prove the end of our trouble. They have tried us with argument, lies and brute force, and from now on the sailing will be smooth."

CHAPTER XXVII.

PUZZLING OVER WORDS.

Sam was walking up and down the room, still elated over my "graceful work," and I was at the window gazing into the fire-towers of a cloudy sunset when a letter was brought to me. It was from Zaleme, and Sam must have seen the leap of my heart for he moved noiselessly across the room and sat down, as far from me as he could get. Ah, what a thrill there can be in the sight of one's name, traced in purple ink! Long I held the letter, unopened, with a red glow from the west falling upon it. My mind flew back like an eager bird and hovered over the house, over her as she must have sat, writing to me; my soul was searching for some balm to stay its trembling. But cold

at my heart lay the fear that she had repented of her words of encouragement, that again she was under the influence of that hypnotizing specter. I opened the letter and a perfume arose and with it a mist and through the mist I saw a purple word, here and there, but I had to wait before I could read. "What did I tell you when you left me? I have tried so hard to recall the words at our parting but cannot. I know that I told you that when I change at all it must be slowly. This morning when I awoke I wondered if it had not all been a dream—your visit here, and it made me sad to think so; but soon I realized it all and then I was sadder than if it had been but a dream, so little do I understand myself of late. Didn't I say to you—'and do *you* speak of reason!' Yes I did, but I ought not to have done so. But my heart did not reproach you, for now as I look back it seems that my heart was gladder when you showed no reason. I ought to scratch this out but I will not. Rhoda was here all day yesterday. She asked me if I had written to you and appeared relieved when

I told her no. She was never more affectionate and she wanted me to go and sit with her where the little grave is, but I wouldn't. Then she reproached me, but very gently, with her tired head on my shoulder. She asked me if I had forgotten her brother and I told her no. She said that she had read romances in vain trying to find a love as devoted as the love he gave to me. It was surely a gift from heaven, she said, and I ought to cherish it always. And I *am* thankful for such a love. I believe he died with my name on his lips and with my image in his heart. I ought not to write thus to you, perhaps, but I must write as I feel. I wish you could have known him, he was so pure and—I should not say it, I know—but almost holy. I don't believe that he ever had an evil thought. Uncle Stephen, who is a shrewd judge of men, was devoted to him—*was*, yes, but the last time he was out here, the day after you left, I think, he shocked me by asking how long I intended to walk up and down the lane with 'that fellow's ghost.' That was so unlike my uncle. Is it possible that you could have em-

bittered his mind against Calvin, whom you did not know? No, I won't believe it, but to tell you the truth, Rhoda hinted at something of the sort. Day before yesterday I walked to town, and when half way I heard some one laughing. I looked up and saw the culprit, a little boy, sitting on a fence. I asked him why he laughed and he replied that it was because I was talking to myself. Had I been talking to your spirit, walking beside me? I am going to tell you of an awful dream I had the other night. I dreamed that I was out in the orchard. The sun was bright and the air was sweet. I had not been thinking of the little grave, but suddenly I found myself under the tree; and I was about to ask pardon of the grave for having neglected it in my thoughts, when suddenly I saw a snake coiled about the monument. Its eyes glittered and out came its forked tongue, and I ran to the house badly frightened. I met my father and told him and he went out and killed the snake, but its blood was left on the white marble and could not be washed off. And the next morning I was afraid to go out in the

orchard—afraid that I might in reality see the snake. Don't you see how foolishly I am writing to you? But how perfectly a woman gives her confidence to a man when she writes foolishly to him; she is giving him a part of herself. If you receive this letter you may know that I did not read it over, for I know that if I should, it would not be sent, it is so rambling. There was a time when I fancied that I could write a sensible letter, but this one does not prove it. Rhoda says that I am sometimes 'simple' to keep from being serious. Do you know, or can you possibly suspect, that during all this time I am striving to recall the exact words I spoke to you at the moment of our parting? But no matter, you surely will not misunderstand me. I am going to be true to myself for then I shall be true to all others. I have felt the glory of being loved. But is there not a greater glory, the glory of loving? Is not hunger for love a selfishness? In your letter you ask me to study my own heart. I do, but I find many strange characters, like those cut upon ancient stone, a

language unknown to me. And now I must learn these strange characters. But where is the key to this mystic language? Whither shall I turn to find it? For hours at a time I have sat striving to gather my forces, if I have any—seeking to become a reasoning creature; and between me and that which I would seek, there arises a cross and it is red against a gray wall. It all comes back to me, the late hour, the lantern, the oath, with his burning hand clasping mine. His pale, eager face sends a pain to my heart—and thus I muse and my reason is gone. Oh, I know that not in this world has there been such a love as his. * * *

When you write again tell me about your work—give me the strong points you make in your speeches. A newspaper dispatch says that you have carried the most of the primary elections. Why didn't you tell me this? It would have seemed so much better coming from you."

That was all, and I read it over and over again, to breathe the sweetness of a hope, here and there; and in it there was only hope while my heart was straining to catch the light of

revelation. Once there was almost a flash, a flame—when she spoke of the greater glory of loving; and quickly I turned back, but the sentence had lost its brightness. And then hope, which at first had been so buoyant, began slowly to sink. I had drawn upon the words until they were sapped of their meaning. I turned about and looked at Sam.

“Bad news, Lucian?”

“No news at all—only words.”

“But with her, words may be full of meaning.”

“They must indeed when she fills a grave with them and lets them hold her heart down to the earth. I wish I had dug them up.”

“No, you don’t wish that; you are afraid of them—you would sooner dig into the tomb of Shakespeare, gazing at the curse cut into the stone.”

“Yes, Sam, I acknowledge it. Wouldn’t you be afraid?”

“Yes. She is a strange creature and she may be going through a strange evolution. Don’t disturb it—wait.”

"It is impossible. I can't wait."

He looked at me with his grim, three-cornered smile. "You remind me of a man who was going to be hanged. When the judge pronounced sentence he swore that he couldn't stand it. But he did."

There came a rap at the door. Sam opened it and admitted Hotze. He grabbed my hand and wrenched it. He swore that we couldn't lose him, a fact with which Sam was not slow to agree. Hotze was fresh from a district which had been antagonistic to me, but which had been completely won over by good work among the "boys." "And say," he went on, "I arrived just in time to hear the whole town laugh over your horse-whipping of that fellow. Do you know he would have shot me once if I'd let him? It's a fact. What did I do? I kept out of his way, of course. I don't want to kill a man even to keep him from killing me; and when the worst comes to the worst, I keep out of a fellow's way. That's all. Yes, sir, the whole town is laughing, and they have to sweep people out of the office down stairs—want to

come up here to see you. But that's right—let 'em stay out. We don't want to be too familiar. By the way, Hall, I have found out what made you laugh so when I spoke of St. George and the dragoon. I ought to have said *dragon*. But if you let a little thing like that tickle you, why you'll laugh yourself to death if you run with me. Well, Howardson, there's no if or and about it, we are going to get there. I was never as sure of anything in my life. It would take a mighty bad break to beat us now. Recollect that fellow Briggs, of San Antonio—fellow that come up to tell you that he was your open faced enemy? Well, he's shouting for you now. Oh, the thing's cut and dried. And Hall, I am free to say that a good deal of the credit is due to you."

"Thank you," said Sam, warming toward him. "Yes," he added, "I think we are all right; and we are going to remember our friends."

"The only way to do, Hall. Statesmanship's all right, you understand, but the statesman

has got to burn patronage in his fire box, so to speak, or his steam will go down."

And Old Sam agreed with him. Surely my friend was growing more tolerant. There had been a time when such a statement would have stung him. Had this oil-oozing politician won him with a word of commendation? Was his heart so set on my success that praise for his services to me had melted his resentment and his prejudices? Ah, being a true friend how rare he was. How old-fashioned, how romantic is unselfish friendship! How strongly does it draw upon today's cold and materialistic incredulity! Was the past less wise and therefore nobler than the present? Man was never more heroic than he is today, never more willing to shed his blood; but being shrewder, a closer questioner of self, a keener inquirer into the motives of other men, he is not so disinterested a friend. Thus I mused as I looked at Sam, who surely was not a man of today. Nature and years of sorrow had stamped him the enemy of such a man as Hotze, but now he was so wrapped up in my affairs, so grateful for an

acknowledgment that something was due to his foresight and his skill as a manager, that he was willing to trample upon nature. Hotze went out and I said to Sam: "You have overlooked your antipathy to that fellow, and all because——"

"Of vanity," he quietly interposed. "He flattered me and I was too weak to resist."

"Are we all so weak as that?"

"Yes. There is only one man who is strong toward the world, the man in love, and he has been robbed of his reason. But, Lucian, I doubt the existence of—love as men know it. It is not love, it is disease, poison. I believe that it becomes not only a mental but a physical ailment. But we won't talk about it, for of necessity we must thresh the same old straw. God, I wish it were all threshed so fine it would blow away."

Late at night he came to my room to deliver a telegram; and he found me standing beneath the gas lamp, reading my letter. And when he came in early the next morning he caught up the telegram from the table and cried out:

"What, haven't you opened this yet?" I had not; during all the night my mind had been searching for rest-spots in her letter. He tore open the dispatch, glanced at it and announced that we had carried another primary election. "It was one that had been in doubt, too, Lucian."

"Yes? That is something to be thankful for. Wait a moment. What would your heart tell you that this sentence means?"

He looked at me with his old smile, and remarked: "A dead heart cannot interpret."

"But your experience is not dead. Let me have *its* judgment."

I read the sentence to him and he shook his head. "I don't know. It might mean anything and it might mean nothing. Heart might give to it a direct meaning, but experience says it does not know."

"Sam, I am going to San Antonio today—I am going to see if that cross is red upon the wall."

"Lucian, honestly you are not well. You have gone through too much of late. You are

unstrung. Go with me to Riplar and let us try to rest. Won't you?"

"No, I am going first to the Alamo, to see if that cross is red upon the wall."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

GAZING INTO THE OLD CORNER.

I arrived in San Antonio late at night. There were but few persons in the lobby of the hotel. Two of them came forward, shook hands with me and then kindly permitted me to go to my room. I arose early the next morning and sat at the window, waiting for the first rays of the sun to fall upon the Alamo. But when the first rays came they fell upon a letter which I held low upon the window sill. I was still striving to extract a balm with which to anoint a suffering heart. Old Sam had spoken the truth. I was not well. I had begun to lose faith in Zaleme. She did not know her own mind, and this argued a weakness of character. Or was it strength instead of weakness? I put the letter into my pocket and sat gazing at the Alamo, now bathed in light. When first

I had looked from that window, my fancy had "vitoscoped" the battle; I saw the heroes fighting hand to hand with the Mexicans that climbed upon the walls. The Mexicans fell until the ground was covered with them, but others advanced out of Santa Anna's horde till the heroes were crushed. I heard the blood—drip, drip. But now I could see nothing but the old walls, gray in the sun. Was my fancy dead? And then I started, for on the wall appeared a red cross. I got up, walked about the room, tried to read a newspaper, read my letter, looked again at the old wall, to find that it was gray with no sign of red. Some one knocked. I opened the door and Quailes seized my hand. He started back and asked me if I were ill.

"No, hard work," I answered.

"Well, your work is about over and you'll soon be all right. Well, sir, I am devilish glad to see you," said he, sitting down. "And you don't know how much good it does me every time I see that we have carried a primary. And we've got enough to make a dead sure thing

in the legislature. But you don't seem as keen for the office as you were. By the way I met the Doctor some time ago and he told me that you had been to his father's home in Kentucky."

"Yes, I had business up——"

"You bet you did. I knew that the first day you met her in the Alamo. It's all right—I won't say anything about it. But say, how do you stand? That's all right. Of course you'll win there just as you will in the legislature. Well, sir, as soon as I introduced you to her I said to myself: 'As little as you think of it you may be talking to fate right now.' I saw you were hit hard, Senator."

"But did you see that she was hit hard? Tell me, did you see that?"

"Well, I don't know as to that. Women govern themselves better than men, and you can't always tell how hard they are hit. I don't believe they are as quick as men. But if you want her she's yours—that's all there is to it. Why, look what a fight I've had—even after all hands acknowledged that she stood there gazing into the eye of fate. I thought

your letter had fixed it all right, and it would with a woman of reason, but my girl's mother is not in the habit of reasoning. She is swayed by prejudice alone. Shortly after you left here some one told her that I had been drunk. I went to her. I saw that she was mad because I denied it and then I acknowledged it. Then you ought to have seen her. She ordered me out of the house. I said to her, 'Madam,' said I, 'you have been misinformed. I acknowledged a falsehood just to please you—I thought you would compliment me for self-abnegation. But I want to tell you right now that I was not drunk.' But she insisted on my going and I went; but I didn't let it drop. I sent her credentials—depositions of the mayor, chief of police, city physician, city clerk—all of them, and it had effect."

"It is a good thing they happened to know, Quailes."

He winked. "Or at least it is a good thing they happened to be candidates for re-election. Yes, sir, the old woman forgave me with most Christian-like gentleness, but she didn't want

me to marry her daughter. Now what the deuce did I want with her forgiveness unless she gave me the girl? Why, I wouldn't give her ten cents for all the forgiveness she could scrape up in a year. Well, what did I do? I went over the files of the paper and got figures showing from the primaries the number of votes you would have on joint ballot and I sent them to her together with a letter reading something after this fashion: 'You have in your possession a letter concerning the integrity of my character. It was written by a man which the enclosed figures will inform you will be elected to the U. S. Senate at the forthcoming session of the legislature. Who knows but that I may be called upon to serve this Senator as private secretary? And who knows but that a certain lady might wish to visit her daughter in Washington, where she might be introduced into society by a Senator?' What did she do? What could she do? The mails were too slow. She telegraphed. And so it is all settled again. But let us say a word about that private secretary business. That's a job I don't want. I'm

a newspaper man. And as I intimated to you on a former occasion I am the best in the State. By the way, I met Dandridge Redmon last night. He was in a gambling house where he had killed two men not a great while ago. He strutted about as if he thought every one was afraid of him. He said that he would meet you again one of these days and wouldn't hit you with a whip, either. And then I went up to him. You may not know it, not having seen me tried, but I am about as game as they make 'em. And why not? Haven't I got a right to be, and doesn't it stand me in hand? I walked up to him and said: 'You big brute, you had a pistol the last time you met him. Why didn't you use it?' 'Who are you?' he asked and I gave him my card. He looked at it and tried to smile. He had heard of me. He knew I was a game cock and would stay in the pit. He slunk out. And you bet he'll never molest you. He was glad enough the other day to get off with his life. Do you want me to interview you or have you had enough?"

"I would like to rest," I answered. "I don't

want to see any one—don't want any one to know I'm in town—and keep that recent convert, Briggs, away if you can."

"All right, I'll fix him. He owes the hotel a bill, and I'll tell him they want the money. He won't come round." Quailes sat looking at me and after a time he remarked: "You are going to make a record in the Senate."

"No, I think not, Quailes. Since the fire of my yearning has paled, I see that I am more of a sentimentalist than a political enonomist or a statesman. I have read great books as a duty and lesser ones as a delight."

"That reminds me of an objection a fellow offered concerning you the other day. He called you a poet. I told him you were my friend and that I didn't want to hear anything like that from him. Poetry, why hang their hides on a fence, to me a mind that has no poetry in it is as barren as a wind-swept prairie. But the average voter thinks poetry means effeminacy. He thinks that verses belong to women when the fact is that a true poet is the bravest man alive; he is ready to give his life

for his belief. But you did publish a volume of verses didn't you, Lucian?"

"Yes, for private circulation. And I have grieved over the fact, when the politician was strongest within me, but since those grim old walls out there have arisen in my dreams——"

"You mean since you met Zaleme Acklin?"

"Yes, that is exactly what I do mean. Since I have known her, my verses have ceased to be so contemptible in my sight. I don't say that I have written poetry of——"

"No, and don't say it where the politicians are likely to get hold of it. I tried to pick up a copy but couldn't—had to go about it in a quiet way, you know. You got any on hand?"

"I sent the last copy to Zaleme but a few days ago; and I haven't heard yet what she thinks of it. I shall be either lifted or lowered in her opinion; it was a risk to run, but I was bold—one of your brave poets. Here and there the worst writer of verses may reveal himself, and when he does he is for one moment if for no more a true poet, one of God's children, crying to the Father."

"You are right, Lucian; you are not so much of a politician. But come on and let's go to breakfast."

When we had eaten breakfast he left me; he knew that I wanted to go alone to the Alamo. And I stood in the room where Bowie's blood had laid the dust. Visitors had begun to arrive, and some of them were about me; I heard the low hum of their talk, but I did not turn to look at them. I was gazing into the corner, at the wall whereon the cross had been drawn, but there was no stain of red. I knew that it could not be there, that imagination's finger must trace it upon the mind. But ah, this imagination, when the nerves are taut and tingling and the mind is almost diseased! How much worse than reality, for we accept the real and cease to speculate. Out of the hum behind me—into my startled ears came leaping the words—"The Red Cross." I wheeled about, almost treading upon the foot of an old gentleman. "I beg your pardon," said I, bowing to him. "But didn't I hear you speak of a red cross?"

“Not of a red cross—no, sir; but of the society of The Red Cross, as a member of which I have served on the battlefield.”

I apologized to him and went out into the chapel, down to the window beneath which Zaleme and I had stood, listening to the lispng wind. It was here that she had said she would demand a love so desperate that he would kill himself if he believed that she did not love him. But in this letter—and the soft light fell upon it—she had written of the greater glory of loving. I felt that I was being studied and commented upon, and looking up I saw two men gazing at me, and my acute ear had caught what one of them was saying: “He’s got the figures of the campaign right there in his hand.” Yes, figures of speech in the heart’s campaign! As I was going out I glanced into Bowie’s room, and there in a glimpse was the red cross. I hastened into the room, stood in the corner, passed my hand over the wall, gazed closer—and there was a dim spot of red, the fading blood of a hero.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MET HER IN THE ROAD.

Turn whither I might there was no rest to be found. Ambition, the great nerve tonic, was dead. But would it not rise again, if the heart should find ease in the possession of the object which had caused its distress? No matter, it was dead now, and to muse upon its probable resurrection in the future could offer no relief to present weariness. If a man could forget his mind—his heart! If he could take off his head after the manner of the dancing skeleton, scour it of unwholesome thoughts and tantalizing fancies—throw it from him and lie down to refreshing sleep,—and if upon awaking he could take it up and readjust it, how much fitter would he be for the tedious affairs of this life! I permitted even such nonsense as this to seep

through my mind, so foolishly speculative can a man become when under a weight that is bearing him down to the ground. I could find no rest and no affinity except with Old Sam, so I returned to Riplar. He was asleep in the office when I arrived, and he sat up, his grayish hair bristling, and he said that he had been dreaming. He hung his head low and sat rubbing his eyes as I often found myself doing, trying forgetfully to wipe out a vision; and after a time he remarked: "Lucian, I was dreaming of Lucy Hedges." Years had passed since I heard him utter the name of the woman who had blighted his life. "She is in town," he added.

"What, you don't mean it!"

"I am not in the habit of joking about her, Lucian. Yes, she is here and I have seen her. Her husband is dead and she has come back, so I understand, to live with her mother. I met her in the road near old Carson's house—her mother, you know, lives just beyond—and for a moment I thought I saw a ghost, but she smiled and spoke to me. My—my blood urged

me to cry out, 'Out with your grinning!' but I merely bowed to her and passed on. And just now I dreamed that I met her again, and this time I did not merely bow and pass on. I raised my hand above her head and denounced her, and I saw her kneel upon the ground; and Lucian, if I meet her again I will denounce her—as a murderess."

"No, Sam, I wouldn't do that."

Then came his sharp smile. "Oh, no, you wouldn't—you would simply cut her throat. That's what you would do, and before God it is what I ought to do." He arose and walked about the room. "I understand," he went on, "that she expects to live here permanently, and if that is the case I shall have to leave. I have already spoken to a man with regard to the sale of my effects. Don't advise me, Lucian; I can't live here."

I knew that his mind was set and I did not advise him. I agreed with him.

"Where do you expect to go, Sam?"

"Mexico—in the mountains, as high up above her as I can get. But I want to see her

one more time—for a few moments. I want to show her that even though she killed my heart my mind is still alive—and I am going to pronounce upon her the worst curse that ever came from the lips of man. The curse of excommunication, in the dark ages, would look pale beside it.” He walked up and down, muttering to himself, making motions as if dealing a death blow with a knife. After a while he grew calmer and then he said: “I expected you home and I told them not to forward your mail. In your desk you will find a letter from Kentucky.”

And now I forgot his troubles and the woman who had trampled his heart under her feet. I snatched out the letter—and the first reading eased my heart a little, but doubt arose with the second reading and increased with the third. “You did not tell me that you had written a book of poems,” she said. “Were you ashamed of your earlier fancies? You should not have been. But the little book has fastened a fib upon you. When we came to the flowery bank in the woods near Uncle Car-

son's house, you burst out in blank verse; and you told me that it was from one of the oldest dramatists, but I find the poem in this volume. If you are ashamed to own your own verses you ought to be ashamed to recite them. But I should not say this. Why do I so persistently overlook the fact that you are a man with a reputation and are dignified—at times! Don't misunderstand me, please. You are a true poet, in my opinion, and your book has given me a rainbow glimpse of your soul."

Now what did she mean by that? A rainbow glimpse! A glimpse of promise? Then why didn't she say so? In her opinion I was a true poet. Did she mean that others might think ill of my muse—others more capable of judging—but that *she* would ignore all protests against me?

The letter continued: "Did you say anything to hurt Rhoda's feelings? She intimated as much, but I can't believe you did. And now I must confess something. She is beginning to wear upon me, to weary me. Oh, she is so painfully sensitive. Sometimes she sheds tears

at the tenderest word. She makes too free a gift of her tears. Somehow I can't help but suspect them. She wants me to do something that would involve the sale of my farm. I wonder if she is really disinterested? You have made an everlasting friend of Uncle Stephen. You remember mother's wild grape wine? She declared that he shouldn't have any more, but he came out last Sunday and drank it all. And then he said to me that he had told you something and that you are at liberty to tell me. It must be something about Calvin White. What was it? But it could be nothing bad, for he walked the earth a god among men. Rhoda is constantly afraid that I may do his memory an injustice, as if such a thing on my part were possible * * *

It seems so long since you were here; and I could reproach myself for having told you to go, but it had to be; you had too long suffered the withdrawal of your energies from the field of contest for a great prize. It was and is my earnest wish that you should win. If you fail, and especially should you fail through any

lack of effort on your part, it will be a deep grief to me. You told me that it had long been the ambition of your life, therefore, it was not just to your future that you should relax. January is not a great way off, and then you will step forth a victor. Mother does not feel disposed to visit Texas again so soon, traveling is so tiresome to her, but I am coming."

I put the letter into my pocket and a few moments later when I was taking it out, Old Sam remarked: "Lucian, I was just thinking that not on the face of the earth are there two completer fools than we are. And worst of all, I am a revengeful fool." He came over to where I sat, and began to make gestures at me with his long finger, like a man "pop" shooting with a pistol. "Yes, I am revengeful and it does something within me—surely not a heart—but it does me good somewhere when I think of the curse I am going to pronounce upon that woman. I would do it, Lucian, if I were dying and knew that my soul would be sent to the most sulphurous pit in hell. I swear that I could walk with bare feet in her blood and

never flinch. Isn't that brutish? But I could do it. Look at the years that have been dead years to me! And do you think that I am going to smirk and forgive her? I ought to cut her throat. Oh, that's exactly what I ought to do—and when I meet her again I'll have no knife about me. But look how strong these fingers are. See this!" He set his teeth and went through violent motions, as if strangling her. "Couldn't I choke her to death in a minute? She couldn't cry out, but she could gurgle and that would make me laugh."

"Don't, Sam—you must not talk that way."

"Oh, it's easy to say that. But wait till you have suffered as much as I have. And you may, old fellow; it's in the cards—you may."

"I know it, Sam, and not for a moment do I lose sight of the fact. Surely she does not know her own mind. Then how can I find rest in the study of her heart? I believe, however, that she is ambitious; my election will have weight."

"I wouldn't like to think so," said Sam.

"And I shudder to feel it so, but all the

same I am afraid it is true. And I am going to win, Sam."

"I know it. And I wish I could stay to witness your triumph, but I can't."

"When do you expect to start for Mexico?"

"Just as soon as arrangements can possibly be made. But the most important thing to me is seeing her again. Now don't you be afraid—I am not going to murder her."

At another time—a time before I had met Zaleme—I could not have restrained a lament over his departure; we had been associated so long and were such close friends, but now I could not fasten my mind upon him or his trouble, and surely I could calmly have viewed a great calamity, out of failure to grasp its meaning. My nature had been changed.

During all that day I puzzled over my letter, though surely it was plain enough, or would have been to an unclouded eye; and more than once during the night did I get up to search for secreted meanings among those purple words.

Sam was not at breakfast when I went down

stairs the next morning, and I waited a long time at the office, wishing that he would come, but he did not, and I walked forth, aimlessly at first; and then turned toward Carson's house. But not desiring to meet the old man, so full of indelicate gibes he surely would be, I turned off into the woods, going straightway to the bank whereon Zaleme and I had sat. The bank was brown, the heat had killed the flowers; and I passed on, looking for a shadier place where I might sit down to worry again over my letter. Near the roadside was a branching oak and beneath it, in a corner of the rail fence, the grass was green and inviting. I sat down and my mind flew away to an old stone bridge and a garden where the shrubbery stood high above the wall. Suddenly I started; a voice had aroused me—Sam's voice. And looking through the fence I saw him standing only a few feet distant from me, and near him stood a woman gazing into his eyes. I ought to have come out of my hiding place, but I was fascinated by the scene and did not move.

“Madam, I wanted to see you once more,”

said Sam. His hat was off, his hair looked white and his face was paler than I ever had seen it.

"Yes," she quietly replied, looking at him. The years had been gentle with her, though poverty had left its mark, for she was poorly attired, but she looked strong, and stood as if gracefully she had stepped out of the past.

"Madam, you have come back here to live, and I am going to Mexico."

"Are you going so far, Sam?"

He started and I did, too, for I saw that she was suffering.

"Yes, the further from you the better. But I was determined to see you again, and I went to your mother's house this morning to look for you, and when I learned that you had come this way I was glad, for I wanted to see you alone. Do you know why?"

"To reproach me."

"Oh, you draw it mild. No, not to reproach you. Reproach is gentle compared with what I am going to say. Madam, I am going to

curse you as a woman was never cursed before. Now listen to me."

"Yes, Sam," she said, wiping her eyes, "yes, but first of all let me say something and then I will listen to your curse. You know I was very young and I heeded the advice of older ones. My father and mother begged and threatened me—father swore that he would take your life. They thought that man had money. Poverty had been the curse of their lives. My oldest sister was far away from home, and starved to death, they said. And they would save me—they had forgotten that there was love in the world—they wanted me to be rich. And at last I yielded. But as God is my judge, through all these years you and you alone have been in my heart. Once in the night he heard me praying for you, and he beat me. But I was afraid to leave him; he swore he would kill me. And—and Sam, I named my little boy for you—named him secretly, called your name when no one was near—and when they buried him, I went alone to the grave at night and wrote 'Little Sam' on the board; and

whenever the rain would wash it off I would write it on again. And he found it out and beat me. But his day came. He died, and I came home—walked nearly all the way, to see you, Sam, to ask you to forgive me.”

“My God, Lucy,” was all he said, and he stood as if struggling against a great wind, and the tears were streaming from his eyes.

“Sam,” she said, “even if you cursed me your voice would be sweet to me after all those hard and cruel years. Oh, I have looked away back upon a love that was a religion to me, and you were the prophet of that religion—the saint.”

Poor old Sam was on his knees, with her hand pressed to his lips; and she put her arms about him and raised him to his feet, and they stood there, weeping. I saw him take her to his weary bosom—saw him lead her away, and a mist in my eyes shut them from view.

CHAPTER XXX.

HAPPINESS WAS MAKING ITS ARRANGEMENTS.

I did not see Sam again during the day, but late at night I found him in the office, at the window, with the moon upon him; and his mind was not clothed in life's dull garment, but was wrapped in the fabulous gauzes that are woven in the loom of the soul. He did not utter a word when I entered the room, and in silence I lighted the lamp and sat down. Slowly he turned his face toward me, and it was like a face of one who, after years of doubt and embittered controversy, has meekly accepted the gospel of Christ.

"Lucian."

"Yes, Sam."

Another silence fell and I thought that he

must be dreaming again, but he spoke and his voice was soft.

"I have seen her again."

"Yes, I know it."

"You know it! Who told you?"

"I saw you—I was under the big oak tree and heard all that was said; and I did not condemn myself for weakness when I shed tears with you."

He was silent, gazing out upon the moon-flood, and I did not disturb him but waited for him to speak. "I am glad you were there, Lucian. I—don't know what to say now, the world is all so new to me again. You won't be offended if I ask you to leave me alone, will you?"

I took his hand and he laughed softly, and when I told him that I would put out the light, he said, "Yes, if you please."

Until nearly noon the next day I was engaged with a delegation in my room at the tavern, and when I went to the office there was Old Sam—or young Sam, now—walking up

and down with a flush of happiness on his face and with humor in his smile.

"What do you want, boy?" I asked, and he laughed as I had not heard him laugh for many a year. "Sit down there, Lucian, and let me tell you how delightful a thing it is to be what the average man would call a fool. Oh, I wouldn't be wise for any amount of money. By Jove, what a beautiful day."

"Why, Sam, it's drizzling rain."

"That so? Well, but isn't it beautiful? To a man with—a heart, I might say—everything in nature is beautiful—calm, storm, rain and shine. Yes, sir, to a man with a heart. And I have a heart now, as fresh, as new—as the pair of red top boots the boy used to take to bed with him at night. It was at one time as dead—dead as Lazarus, you understand, but like Lazarus it arose from the dead. Lucian, I have done that girl a wrong, all these years. Look at the infamous pressure brought to bear on her—her father threatening to kill me, and you know he was a bad man. Why, it was enough to break any woman's—child's spirit;

and remember how young she was. Oh, but you ought to have heard that dear old lady begging my pardon yesterday."

"What dear old lady?" I asked.

"Why, her mother. Don't you know her? Of course you do. She brought out the letters that Lucy had written to her from time to time—and such letters—gems, every one of them; and in each one was breathed her love for me. Just think of what she went through. Why, my suffering was as nothing compared with hers. But how young she looks. Her love kept her youthful—and her hope! Women are more hopeful than men, Lucian. By the way, do you know I'm worth more financially than I supposed? Yes, and I've got a real estate man looking up a house for me. We won't board, you know. And now think of it, the consciousness that she is there all the time, waiting for me! Yes, sir. Ah, but how she has suffered. And how I am going to steal the memory of it out of her mind. You remember I told you it was in the cards that you might go through about what I did. Well, it's also

in the cards that you may not. I believe—I simply know that everything will come out all right. You'll be elected, and you know the rest." He walked up and down the room, halted at the window and said: "I had no idea that girl's mother was so poor. She is poor. And if I had known it don't you suppose I would have left things on her doorstep at night? Lucian, I've quit swearing. What could be more useless—more foolish than to swear? Well, I must go out now and see that real estate agent."

He went away in merry mood, and after walking about, musing, I sat down to write to Zaleme. "Sam Hall is soon to marry the woman who trampled upon his heart and killed it. But she has taken it up out of the dust, breathed the breath of love's life upon it and now it is warm. The vulture years, heavy and black, that had settled down upon him, have sullenly flapped their stiffened wings and flown away; and he is young again. The other day, before this new life came to him, he said to me that it was in the cards that I might

suffer as he had suffered, treading a desolate road that seemed to be endless. I knew what he meant—and now you know; you know that it rests with you. How old the path may be, and yet how new the thorns that beset it! Take all attempts that all men have made to express the agony of every heart, and they would not portray the agony of one heart. And Zaleme I swear to you that I would rather be dead and buried in a road that convicts tread, going to and from their dungeons—I would rather be devoured by wolves than to know that year after year I must endure this torment. Morbid! Yes, I grant that I am. But you see I have not the courage to demand a decisive yes or no. I am struggling to conquer, praying that something may happen, but what that something may be or what I hope it to be, I can form no clear idea. Nothing is clear to me. You commanded me to win the fight and I have won it. The final vote has not been cast, it is true, but my opponents acknowledge defeat. They know my strength. But without you this victory would be no more to me than a drop of

dew to a man dying for water. And now, as I have done your bidding, why don't you let me come to you again? Let me dig up that nightmare—that letter—and read it. No, not read it. I would dig it up and bury it ten times as deep. Before you told me of your dream I had seen in my fancy a snake coiled about the monument. And I would bury the marble in the grave with the letter, and I would sod the ground and leave nothing to mark the place. Zaleme, in your heart you must feel that no one ever could have worshiped you as I do. You never knew of a love so blinding. At times I clutch myself, shake myself as if I would throw off an insanity that is slowly settling upon me. And yet, if you were dead I should not be so rent as I am now. I could look upon your face and feel that you belonged to me as much as to any one living—but ah, the dead! Can the dead claim the dead! Don't you see how it all ends, every line of reasoning that I attempt? * * * Yes, your uncle told me something and he said that I was at liberty to tell you, but I cannot. I wish

he had not told me, for being human I was tempted to tell you. But please do not mention it again. Were you inspired to speak of the greater glory of loving? Did you write it with the thoughtlessness of an inspiration and did you resist the temptation to erase it because it had been thoughtless? Sometimes it fills my soul with a great light."

I wrote page after page in the same heedless strain, posted the letter when night had come, and walked out into the starlight to think, to worry; and unconsciously I took the road to Carson's house. I came abreast of the place just as the moon was rising, and I halted to look upon the black shadow lying in the yard, and I thought how bright even those black shadows would become if Zaleme should suddenly step forth from the house. Surely she was the light of the world.

Further down the road I came upon old man Carson. He was driving a flock of sheep into a field, through a gap which he had made in the fence, and he did not recognize me at first—in the moonlight I was so deceiving to his old

eyes; but when I spoke he cried out, "Oh, it's the Senator." We shook hands and his grip was powerful and he employed it without stint, as if by physical pressure he would assure me of his faith in me and of my election. I helped him to replace the rails and then we walked up the road toward his house. The reconciliation of Sam and Lucy was known throughout the neighborhood, and the old man was free with his opinion: "It do seem strange how things come about, don't it? Why, you know I never could have figured on them comin' together again. But as the good book says you can't bet on what the day may bring forth." In his earlier years he was given to horse-racing, and he meant no irreverence now in associating the word "bet" with the scriptures. "But it appears to me," he went on, "that some folks forgive mighty easy. Howsomedever, it's the best thing for Hall and for her, too, for that matter. Oh, she's a good woman, mind you; and everybody speaks of how young she looks. Why is it a woman don't like it when you say another woman looks young? That don't

necessarily mean that all other women look old, but it seems to strike some of them that way. I spoke about Lucy's lookin' young—not more than three or four times, and my wife she 'lowed I'd better have it made into a song so I could sing it. Well, the fall of the year is almost upon us, and it will soon be your time to enter into the contest over there at the legislature. I don't reckon, howsomever, it will be much of a contest—the thing is putty well cut and dried, it seems like to me. Senator, I don't want to tromp on corns, nor nothin' of the sort, but I'd like to know if you an' my niece are goin' to marry?"

"I hope so, Mr. Carson. That's all I can say."

"And I reckon it's about enough to say. To be the wife of a Senator is mighty fetchin'. There ain't many of them that can git away from that fact and stay away, and I reckon my niece is a human bein' along with the rest of them. Let me see, now, what is her name?"

"Why, Zaleme, of course. Is it possible you don't know?"

"Oh, yes, Zaleme; but why of course? I've got so much on my mind that I can't recollect all these odd things. It might be of course to you and not to me, you understand. The evenin' you first got back here from Kentucky, I asked my wife what the girl's name was and—and it seemed to fret her a little; and she 'lowed that I could remember a horse's name easy enough, and I 'lowed I could if I had my money on him. And besides, you know a man ain't apt to give a horse such an odd name, that is, not often, but I have known horses with odd names, but somehow they were easy to recollect."

He insisted upon my coming in to sit with him until bedtime, but I had grown weary of his talk; and I left him, half fancying that I ought to shake myself lest some of his words were clinging to my garments, to be heard again out on the road.

I met Sam in the tavern and he told me that he had just closed a trade for a house; and I smiled and said that I was glad, but it was not wholly a truth, for afterward I felt that for a moment I must have been envious of his happiness.

CHAPTER XXXI.

GRATEFUL FOR A HEROIC DEED.

Envy is a sneaking evil. It sneaked into my mind and it sneaked out, unwelcome serpent; and I told Sam and he laughed. What had become of his three-cornered smile? How busy he was with carpenters and painters! I went with him to his house, dreary among scrub oaks; but at a word from the heart's magician dahlias and roses sprang up in waste places. And it was not long before there came the transformation scene.

Lucy was kept close at home, with women who were sewing for her, but she emerged one night and rode in a carriage; and friends who had not seen her for years came forward to take her hand as she and Sam stood side by side in the church. The next day I halted at

Sam's house, announcing myself as a thirsty traveler, and they laughed so merrily in their happiness that the serpent was likely to sneak into my mind again.

"I'm not doing anything today but listening to music," said Sam. "Lucy has been singing to me—and I want you to look at that piano; bargain if you ever saw one—was sent out last night while we were shaking hands in the church. But didn't you see it when you came home with us? Of course you did, but my mind has been so taken up with music that I almost forgot who did come home with us."

"Why, Sam," said his wife, smiling upon him and brushing something off his shoulder—something doubtless invisible to any eye except the eye of a loving woman—"there are things you must not forget—not Lucian, for you know we owe so much to him."

"Yes," Sam cried, "I do especially. I would have died if it hadn't been for Lucian." And his wife gave me her hand out of gratitude, and I accepted it as if the heroic deed were fresh in my memory. "Sam, dear," she said,

"you'd better shut that door for the air is positively cool."

"Is it?" he asked, obeying her and giving me a humorous wink. "Now you'll have to tell me about these things. I am a stranger, you know—haven't got used to myself yet. Yes, Lucian, you kept me alive." His wife gave me her grateful hand again, murmured "how good of you," and we all of us were foolish alike. And after a time what a dinner they served, black-eyed peas with corn bread baked by an old negro woman! Now, I hold that the making of corn bread should not be attempted by one not born and reared in the South. It ought to be made by a negress, and to attain perfection in the art she must years ago have become a grandmother. Once I heard an old Tennessean railing against France and when I reminded him of Lafayette, he exclaimed: "That's all right as far as it goes, but a French cook over here at this hotel put sugar in corn bread." He swore that such an outrage ought to be punishable by law, and as the years pass—as we drift further and further

away from the perfume and the romance of the years gone by, I find myself more ready to subscribe to the old fellow's doctrine. I once saw a private letter in which it was declared that "Old Hickory" swore he would have a Belgian's ears for the crime of boiling snap beans in clear water, that is, without bacon. Sam listened to me as I recounted those melancholy facts and then roared out, "Why, if you weren't already elected, Lucian, such convictions as you have just expressed would soon turn the tide in your favor."

Late in the afternoon when I had taken leave of them, Lucy called me back and running to meet me, she thanked me again for having saved her husband's life. I assured her that the corn bread had more than discharged the debt, and Sam laughed, with such an outburst that a mule colt that was following a mare, bestrode by a negro preacher, brayed his defiance and kicked up his heels.

At the postoffice a letter was waiting for me, and I shut myself in my room with it; and time ceased to be. "How surprised I was to

hear that the woman who wronged Mr. Hall has returned and raised his heart from the dead. Don't you remember promising me, while you were here, that I might read a letter which he had written to you? But I have never read it. Did it contain something about me? Yes, for you intimated as much. And if it was not very bad or if it were very good you will tell me after a while I know. But why don't you tell me what uncle said that you might tell? Oh, it is easy enough to request me not to mention it again, but how can you expect me to be frank and confidential when you keep so much from me? * * * Sometimes I don't know what to write to you—and at such times I should not know what to say if you were here, not because of a desire to be silent, but because I should be afraid to trust myself to speak. When I am walking over a path long neglected by me, I halt and gaze at a once familiar object and muse. 'How I have changed since I saw it last.' And then, when I return to the house, I wonder if really I have changed at all. One day you may perhaps

know what I mean by the greater glory of loving. I tore up a letter that I finished just now; it was to you, and in it I attempted to tell you something, but fearing that I might not be honest with myself, I destroyed it. But if my nature should be wrought upon to the extent of a revolution, or reformation, I might better say, I will tell you of it. Mother noticed the rapid movement of my pen while I was writing to you, and she reminded me of your prominence among men and declared that I was not careful enough with my letters. I replied that it was impossible for me to be school-mamish with you, but now that I think of it, I'm afraid I am, at times. * * * The weather here is growing cooler. I don't know that I ever before so carefully noted the changing season. Dad laughed at me yesterday and said that I had my fingers on the pulse of the thermometer. I have never been fond of snow, but now I wish for it—the flakes will seem as messages from January, telling of your victory. In the letter which I tore up just now,

I believe there was something about your coming here again. But no, wait, please.”

Yes, it was plain enough ; she was ambitious. And it stung me to think that Washington could turn the scale in my favor, but I dared not reproach her with it. I was a coward.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ON THE BATTLE GROUND.

From all parts of the State representative men were speeding toward the capital. How moping had been the weeks since heavy upon me had fallen the conviction that Zaleme was to be won alone by my election. Our correspondence had suffered no interruption, each posted a letter for the return mail, but I had never ceased to worry over what she sometimes must have meant. Just before leaving Riplar for the scene of contest, I thus wrote to her: "I am going to fight hard, if needs be, not that I may stand upon an eminence with a light falling about me—not that I may claim the reward of an ambition that came out of the school reader, borne by the words of Webster and of Clay—not that, but because I have come

to believe that thus honored I shall be more worthy of you." A coward still, I was afraid to say that she would deem me fitter for her love.

Hotze had a brass band engaged to meet me at the railway station, but I dodged him and reached the hotel, not as a laughing stock, but as a sober-minded man. Haney had arranged headquarters, a suite of cheerful rooms, and already had assembled a crowd of friends and supporters. Hotze complained that I had given him the slip. "It's all right," said he, "but I want to tell you that such performances are dangerous. The boys wanted to see you. Say, where's that friend of yours that was with you the last time I saw you?"

"Sam Hall? Why, there he stands."

"That so? I swear I didn't know him—he's so changed. And I don't reckon he'd give it to me now quite as raw as he did on one occasion. Well, we'll make 'em sick on the first ballot, and then they'll get sicker as time goes on. Brother Quailes, how are you? Just got here?"

There was something peculiar about the grip which Quailes gave to my hand and shortly afterward, when an opportunity offered, I asked him if anything had happened.

"Everything has happened," he said, gripping my hand again. "But sir, do you know that after all my high stepping and scroll work the old lady went stale again? Yes, sir, and this time I was determined to tree the cause. And I did. The girl confessed that the old lady was dead set on her marrying a fellow that has money—no sense, mind you—nothing but money. I asked the girl if she cared anything for him and she put her arms around my neck and said she hated him, and that was enough for me. I found out where the fellow was and I went to him. He was buying cotton at the time, on a platform at a railroad station. I went up to him and asked if he could give me a few moments of his valuable time, and he looked at me and asked what I wanted. 'You seem to be a very pleasant old gentleman,' said I. This nettled him and he replied that he wasn't so all-fired old. And then he de-

manded my business. I told him it was important and I took him to one side and said: 'A man told me the other day that he didn't think you were going to live very long. He said you were trying to take a girl away from a desperate sort of a fellow named Quailes, one of the gamest men in the State, if not the gamest, and that Quailes is aching to draw off your blood.' 'Who are you, sir!' he exclaimed, and I said, 'Oh, I'm Quailes, and I want to tell you something while your hearing is good. That little woman doesn't love you—she loves me, and I'm standing shoulder to shoulder with fate. You know what that means. I don't want to hurt you, as I am about to profess religion, and your blood might set me back a little, but this thing has gone far enough. And now I tell you what you do—write this sort of a letter to the old lady—write it here in my notebook: "My Dear Madam, I do not wish to stand in the way of a young fellow who loves your daughter—one of the finest and most affectionate youths in the country—so, therefore, I must bid you good-bye." ' I don't

know that he was scared, though he was a comparative stranger—I think he saw the humor of the situation. At all events he wrote the note and I sent it to the dear old lady, and the next day she wired me word to come and I went. She was very pleasant, but I said, ‘Madam, that’s all lost on me; give me the girl.’ She did and without any fuss at all we were married, and after this senatorial rush is over I want to present to you the handsomest creature you ever saw, and a dame that thinks the world of me and my friends.”

So busy were we all of us that it was long after midnight when we went to bed. And the next day the fight began to assume an earnest look. Apperson’s headquarters were in the same tavern as mine, and I met him in the corridor. He halted, shook hands and said: “Well, sir, no matter what the result may be, it cannot alter the fact that you have made a most brilliant campaign.” I thanked him, wondering why Zaleme had not written to me. A letter from her was more than due. She knew that

the contest had begun. Why did she not strengthen me with words of encouragement?

The first ballot placed me far in advance of any one competitor, still I fell short of a majority of the votes cast, thus failing of election. But my shortage, the wise ones declared, was soon to be made good, albeit there was talk of a "dead-lock." The next day developed no decided change, and the talk of a "dead-lock" was spreading. That night I was closeted for a long time with Haney and a number of experienced politicians. "There is only one danger," said Haney. "They may spring a dark horse. But even that is not much of a danger. We can hold our ground and wear 'em out." And I went away wondering why I did not hear from Zaleme. Hotze, who had not been invited to the close caucus, said that he must have a word with me in my room. I tried to beg off but he insisted and I yielded. He was careful to see that the door was tightly closed; he moved about mysteriously and then sat down.

"This is going to be a hard fight," said he.

I nodded assent and he continued: "I have been in so many of them that I know their color in a minute—they can't fool papa."

"Well," said I, wishing that he were at the bottom of the sea, "what do you advise?"

"I don't know whether you are prepared to hear my advice or not."

"I don't know either, but out with it."

"That's all right, but I want to tell you right now that something's got to be done."

"Well."

He hemmed and hawed; he went to the door, came back and said: "They are going to use money. Do you know that?"

"No, and I don't care."

"Well, now let me say that you'd better care. Do you know what I can do—with a thousand dollars?"

"I know what I can do and I will do it if you don't get out of this room."

I surely would have kicked him, for he showed a disposition to argue the point with me, but Sam called me from the corridor, to ask if I were engaged; and when I told him no he

came in, giving to Hotze, who passed him going out, a sharp and searching look.

"I wanted to tell you about that fellow," said my friend. "I hear that he is trying to squeeze money out of both sides. He ought to be kicked into the street, but it would simply raise a howl and do no particular good. Haven't you heard from her yet, Lucian?" he asked, after a pause.

"No, not a word; and it takes my strength out of this fight."

"But don't worry—it will all come right." He halted at the door and looked back at me, his eye bright and his complexion clear. There was no Old Sam now. "I just wanted to know if you had heard from her. Good night, Lucian."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CONCLUSION.

The night was almost sleepless, and with my mind far away I could scarcely realize that hundreds of earnest men were struggling in my behalf; to me it was a dull and heavy dream. Impatient of the coming light, I arose in the brown of the morning and walked about the streets; and on the hilltop, in the lighter-growing gray of the fledgling morn arose the pride of the State, the capitol whose monstrous granite walls could have defied a mediaeval siege. Therein the fight, my fight, was soon to be resumed. No, not my fight, but a contest fought by politicians who acknowledged me as their head; but in spirit I was far behind the most apathetic of them. My fight was raging within myself—in my tortured mind.

Upon returning to the tavern the clerk handed several letters to me, and they were without color or life—till suddenly my blood leaped, for there was one from Zaleme—and I rubbed my murky eyes and looked again and again. Yes, it was postmarked San Antonio. I hastened to my room, but I did not long remain therein, to puzzle and to worry; I was out again, looking for Haney. This is what I had read:

“Night after night in my dreams I saw the serpent coiled about the marble; day after day I felt that my nature had changed, that my heart was growing. And oh, I could see you as you turned away to leave me; and when you looked back a cry arose to my lips, but I smothered it. I had striven to be frank with you, but could not be; a new nature was coming and I was forced to wait. Lucian, I have dug up the letter, and now, in its silver coffin, it is here on the desk as I write. The silver is bright for I had wrapped it in lamb’s wool and it throws the sunlight into my face—the light of a great revelation, I was going to say, but I

will say nothing now; I will wait just a little longer. And for what? For you. Together we will go at night to the Alamo, and in the corner where the words were written—in the corner where I know there is no red cross upon the wall, we will read them. At times you have demanded that the letter should be read, and then you have said, no, as if afraid. But you must fear no longer—we must listen to the words spoken by the dead, whatever they may be.”

Yes, I was looking for Haney, and I found him, laboring with a legislator whose mind had not been made up. “Want to see you again,” said the politician, speaking to the voter; and then following me into a corner whither I hastily led him, he asked: “Anything wrong?”

“No, something is right.”

“Good, what is it?”

“I am going to San Antonio today.”

He gave me a hard look. “What, and do you call that something good. And at this time. You can’t mean it. Impossible.”

“But I do mean it. I must go.”

"My dear sir, it is almost suicidal to go now—or even for a week yet, perhaps. You have no such interests anywhere on earth as you have here right now. And you can't afford——"

"I can't afford to stay here; I can't explain to you, but I must go—now."

"Mr. Howardson, is it possible that you are losing your mind?"

"It may be possible that I am looking for it."

"If you leave now, sir, it may be the accidental signal to spring the dark horse—and in my opinion, if he's sprung, with you out of the way, he'll win. Come with me a moment. I want you to talk to three men we have almost won over; I want you to tell one of them that you did not publish a book of poems. Come on with me."

"I can't—my train will leave within a few minutes."

He followed me to the curbstone, still urging me not to go; and imploringly he put his hand on my arm after I was seated in the carriage. But I left him, with my heart

aflame, with my soul knocking at the portals of a heaven high above any state house built by man.

Sam was at the station. I had not forgotten him—had inquired for him and had been told that he was out driving with his wife. He took my hand, smiling, and I was surprised that he did not ask for an explanation of my hasty departure—surprised, indeed, that he knew I was going. “I heard you talking to Haney,” said he, “and I beat you over here. Now don’t apologize to me for going. I know. Let everything go to—the deuce. I’ve stopped swearing, Lucian. But everything will be all right. You take my word for it and I know more than these politicians. Who managed your campaign? Who knew more than the rest of them then—all along? Hold on; don’t be in such a swivit to get on. You’ve got plenty of time. I met Hotze this morning and I said to him, said I, ‘Old oil oozer, if I hadn’t stopped swearing you’d hear some music that would sound like a nest of bumblebees stirred

up.' There's the bell. It's all right now. Good-bye."

Was ever a train so slow? Did ever a train stop so long at an unimportant station? Night came and I was still far short of San Antonio. But at last I saw the old town's gleaming lights. I did not know the number of Dr. Acklin's house, but at the station I found a cabman who knew where he lived. First, however, I was driven to the home of the Alamo's keeper and there borrowed a key and a lantern. I urged the cabman to speed his horses, but was ever a Jehu so slow? I looked out, far down the street and could see no house that held a suggestion of the Doctor's place, but the hack turned a corner and there it was, and in the parlor a light was burning. But there was no old-time tune such as had come out of the darkened room, when with questioning mind, unable to comprehend self, I had accompanied the Doctor home. I did not ring the bell, I tapped upon the parlor door, and—and Zaleme opened it; and I stood there, almost blind, with my hand on the door frame, scarcely seeing

her; but she spoke and touched my hand—my vision was cleared, and there she stood, pale in the bright light. I did not seek to put my arms about her; I saw the flash of the silver coffin, and a trembling seized me. But how quiet she was!

"I expected you tonight, and I was waiting," she said. "I am walking in a dream, Lucian, but I shall soon be awake." She put on her cloak, I standing there with a cold light dazzling me; and taking up that light, the casket, she said: "We will go now."

I did not even hold her hand as the carriage rolled along—there was an awe upon me; but my mind was resting, and how thankful I was to be free from that aching heaviness. And yet at times I trembled, when the silver in her lap caught the gleam of an electric light. I did not ask a question, and she spoke not a word. When the carriage halted at the Alamo I helped her out in silence. Just at that moment, a boy ran up and handed a telegram to me, and, signing his book, I tore open the envelope, glanced at the message and thrust it into my pocket. She

asked if it were bad news from the capital and I told her no.

And now we stood in the corner, with the light of the lantern falling from a niche in the wall. She unlocked the casket, looking up with a smile; and she said she still was dreaming. She handed the letter, unopened, to me, and bade me read it; but I shook my head.

"You must not be afraid now," she said. "No appeal can take that new nature away from me."

She broke the seal. The letter was brief. She read it quickly, and with beating heart I watched her, and how strange a light was in her eye when she handed the paper to me. There in my hand was the contents of a little grave that had caused me such agony. And these were the words that so long had been in the ground:

"Zaleme, I am not worthy of you—I forged your uncle's name and I am a criminal. But a woman might even forgive this, but you cannot forgive a shallow and treacherous heart. I grew up to believe that I must always love you,

and who but a wretch could have suffered a change of feeling, and that, too, in so short a time? You have always urged frankness; time and again you have made me promise that I would tell you if I ever changed toward you, even in the slightest degree. I never thought that such a thing was possible, but it was, and that, too, even after the oath. And drugs may be the cause, but be that as it may, another woman—you understand, and I do not think that you can care so much, for you wanted to be loved rather than to love; and now I free you from your oath.”

I made no comment, but in silence held the letter out to her, and for a moment she refused to accept of it, shrinking back, and then she almost snatched it as if in anger. She tore the paper into small bits and I saw them fluttering at her feet as she strove to trample them into the dirt. And now she had clasped her hands across her bosom, and upon her countenance was that glorified radiance which for a moment had illumined her when together we had stood beneath the apple tree. But even

now there came the cool shudder of a doubt, for I thought of her command that I must go forth and win the fight.

"Zaleme, I have read your message. Now you read mine."

I gave her the telegram and looked at her eagerly as she read it, and when she gave me her eyes again, the light within them was divine, and my heart leaped beyond all earthly bounds—she was in my arms, mine completely now; and we heard the wind lispings about the old battlements. But the telegram: "A dark horse has been sprung—elected and your enemies are rejoicing over your defeat. Haney."

"All for me, Lucian, all for me, and I am so thankful now that you are not elected—I should be jealous of the office, there in that city where they change the hearts of men. And now, oh my precious, you know what I mean by the greater glory of loving—oh, my own."

THE END.

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